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SKETCHING FROM
NATURE



PASTEL DRAWING.

SKETCHING FROM NATURE

A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON THE
PRINCIPLES OF PICTORIAL COMPOSITION

By

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TO MY WIFE.

A slight acknowledgment of the debt which, during a number of years has accumulated against the author, too much absorbed perhaps in problems connected with his work. Art is a fascinating, but exacting mistress of whom a wife lacking sympathy and appreciation might easily become jealous.

Hence this tribute to one who has not.

PREFACE

HAVING, for a quarter of a century or so, tried to sketch from Nature, and to help others as well, and having spoilt much paper and wasted quantities of colour in the process, I have wondered (egotistically perhaps) whether the conclusions I arrived at would be of any use to others. A teacher is constantly being called upon to assist in the solution of some problem arising out of the endeavour to interpret Nature. Consequently he is more alive to the multifarious difficulties connected therewith than is the artist who has only his own to contend with. The teacher must return again and again to the beginning in order to appreciate the troubles of his students, and for this reason perhaps he is more sure of his ground, more dogmatic it may be, than another who has never taught. I have come to the conclusion that a sketch, picture, or any work which would claim to be regarded as art, must be based upon design. Every part must be related to every other part, and so composed as to produce one homogeneous whole. Nature can hardly be imitated, she must be interpreted according to the capacity of the interpreter, and upon the depth of his knowledge, the clarity of his vision, and his mental and emotional equipment depends the quality of his work. A fine personality strengthened with a well stored mind is calculated to produce great art. A mean personality or an empty mind can only achieve

mean, vapid stuff. If we learn to love Nature we may be allowed to interpret her. Approach her with a conceit born of ignorance and this enviable lot can never be ours. If within us is a love of beauty and a desire for harmony, we shall find that Nature provides us with a wealth of material wherewith to express our love and desire. But let us remember that beauty lies within ourselves, we must possess it, or for us it does not exist at all. In Nature all is beautiful, all is useful, but it is only the poet who sees the beauty and the use.

I take this opportunity of thanking my publishers (Mr. A. W. Haggis in particular) for the care which has been exercised in the production of this book, and for obtaining reproductions of better men than myself to illustrate the final chapter.

Also the editor and proprietors of the *Doncaster Gazette* for permitting me to use the drawings which first appeared in that periodical (Figs. 49 to 55). Finally I would thank my students, because in bringing me their difficulties they have helped me to realise and to find expression for much that would otherwise have remained either nebulous or unappreciated. I can only hope that this effort of mine will be of use to many other students who desire to sketch from Nature.

F. J. GLASS.

Doncaster,

September, 1926.

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SKETCHING FROM NATURE

CHAPTER I

CHOICE OF SUBJECT AND PLANNING OF SKETCH

" You sit down to your task and are happy. From the moment that you take up the pencil, and look Nature in the face, you are at peace with your own heart."—*Hazlitt*.

THERE are very few occupations which, for enjoyment can vie with sketching from Nature. It leads you out into the open country, where you wander on happily absorbed in your search for a subject. Something there is perhaps of disappointment as well, for time and again you will find subjects which inspire you, almost enough to try your hand upon them, but not quite. There is something in the scene as it stands which seems not quite right, there is perhaps a feature which jars, which mars the oneness, the homogeneity, as it were, of the picture. Rarely, in fact, do we find a subject which is just right: which can be placed on the paper without a slight modification or alteration. When we have been searching for subjects for some time we begin to appreciate Whistler's dictum, " Nature is nearly always wrong." It seems at first sight, this statement

Choice
of
subject

of his, to border perilously upon conceit, but after a little experience we begin to understand, and perhaps to sympathise. For rarely do we find pictures "ready made" for us. Generally some alteration is necessary, some feature will require a little emphasis, while another will need quieting, subordinating to the general scheme as it were. You may indeed consider yourself fortunate if you come across a composition in Nature, which, with no alteration, can be transferred to paper or canvas. The trouble is, with the beginner, that he, or she, rarely knows what to choose, for though a wide panoramic sweep of country may appear very charming when viewed from some hill-top, it will be found to lack all pictorial quality when transferred to paper. The vastness, the breadth and space that made so strong an appeal in the actual landscape is lost, dwarfed and stunted by the scale of our work. We must not forget that all we can see from that hill-top is hardly to be transferred to paper. We must choose a portion only, we must take as it were a phrase or a sentence or two, from their context: let us see then that they convey an idea, are complete in themselves as it were, instead of leaving the spectator with a sense of something lacking. A wood or a group of trees again may seem a most suitable subject as we ramble amongst

them, with a vague picture in our minds compounded of all we have seen in our ramble: but when we essay it we find it looks fussy, restless and muddled, and we know at once that something is wrong.

It is a difficult matter to dogmatise about, this quality which we may call the "picturesque," but there have been evolved out of all the work that artists have done, a few rules which may help perhaps towards a clearer understanding of the subject. These are no laws of the "Medes and Persians," no definite formulæ whereon we can build a picture, but just a few tentative rules which are rather what not to do, than what to do, and how to do it. A sketch as here understood is something quite distinct from a study. A study we assume to be a drawing, or colour rendering, of a tree, building, foreground, sky, or other portion of a scene executed with a view to learning something of its construction, its tone or colour quality. In other words it is a portion rather than a whole. It is intended for future use: to be combined with other studies, incorporated into a picture: but in itself it is never more than a study. By a sketch we understand the work done out of doors when face to face with Nature, which sketch though slight, is yet complete

Picturesque
quality

Sketch

in itself. Lacking in finish it may be, for the most charming effects in Nature are often the most transient ones, but there must yet be a sense of completeness, a clear definite statement as it were, not in the least ambiguous, or it fails of its purpose.

Let us take this as being the difference between the sketch and the study. A sketch is a complete whole, however slightly it may be suggested, while a study is a portion, unrelated, incomplete. Wherein lies the completeness of the sketch? What makes it more satisfying than the study? Into this we will make a few enquiries, and it may help us in our choice of subject, and also in our handling of the subject.

Picture

A picture might be called a finished sketch, for the same laws apply to both, but as generally understood the word picture is applied to the carefully thought out work of the studio, for which, of course, the sketch is often the preparation.

Our subject is sketching, and so we will confine our attention thereto, though the laws of picture making apply equally to both, sketches and pictures. First let us be quite clear upon this point, that a sketch is rather more than a mere transcript from Nature. If

it is to contain any interest at all apart from the topographical or photographic it must contain something of the personality of the artist. It must be his rendering of the scene, must express however inadequately, something of the mood that prompted him to paint it, or it will leave the spectator cold and unmoved. Further, we must not overlook the appeal of craftsmanship, of technique. To those who understand, and care for pictorial art, there is always a joy in the way the pigment is handled, and in this perhaps more than in aught else, the artist stands revealed.

Personality

When looking at a picture we can often say at once "That is a David Cox, a De Wint, a Cotman, a Birket Foster, or a Turner," as the case may be, because there is in its handling, its arrangement and technique, that which reveals the personality of the artist. If these men had been content merely to portray, rather than translate, there would have been but little difference between them. It is a poor ambition anyway, a desire to emulate the camera, and not only poor, but futile: for in the rendering of detail, and hard sharpness of form, the camera is calculated to win every time. Not that the camera is incapable of rendering anything but sharp detail and hard

Technique

Camera

forms, for in the hands of an artist it can be made to produce work of real beauty, but there is an essential difference between the two mediums. There is a freedom, and a spontaneity about canvas or paper, and pencil, charcoal, or colour that the camera must of necessity lack. There is more scope for individuality in the painter's materials than in the photographer's, which should be evident in the painter's work, or, by so much has he failed. To the photographer a limited choice is granted: to the painter the only limit is his own capacity to see and express.

Expression

Before we can express ourselves, however, we must first learn a language and while it does not pretend to be a complete grammar, there may yet be sufficient in this little book to help the beginner to find the rudiments of a language. Every sketch depends for its appeal upon the disposition of its lines, masses, tones and colours (if employed), upon their relationship one to another, and to the shape they occupy. In other words a sketch may very usefully be regarded as an exercise in space filling. The shape in which we are working and the lines bounding that shape are the determinant factors, for the result depends entirely upon the manner in which the internal shapes harmonise with

the bounding shape. The quality of the harmony we weave into our lines, masses, tones and colours, will depend to a large extent upon their relationship to the given shape.

Space
filling

A sketch always looks better when mounted or framed, because the bounding shape is thereby rendered definite and unmistakable. Let us endeavour to see how this applies. We will assume that the scene before us is an open moorland, above a light sky and below a stretch of country considerably darker than the sky. We proceed to divide our panel into two equal portions, and to render as nearly as possible the tones of land and sky. The result we cannot help feeling is monotonous, the masses are too similar in shape and size. To say the least of it this arrangement is unsatisfactory. From this we deduce one of the first laws of picture making—"Avoid equality and aim at variety with unity."

Variety

Fig. 1 illustrates this equality of light and dark, and shows how uninteresting is such an arrangement. Furthermore, the pathway, being central, divides the dark foreground into similar masses, while the spacing of the two tree forms on either side of the path is also poor composition. Fig. 1 then is the type of thing to

avoid when planning a sketch. It may seem strange, but this desire for equality of division, and for repetition of form has to be guarded against most carefully, as it grows out of an innate orderliness and a sense of design which in primitive man led to his decorating pottery with a series of dots and strokes placed at regular intervals. There is design in picture making, but it is not obvious, it is far more subtle than that used in conventional design, because more intangible. A strict guard must be set against repetition, for having drawn a curve, the hand has a tendency to repeat it, and so if we are not careful our sketch will be all similar curves and similar masses.

Fig. 2 shows a low horizon with a wider sky and narrower foreground. This in itself is an improvement, but the pathway again divides the foreground into two equal portions, while the light building standing against the dark bank of trees is plumb in the centre. This is a thing to be avoided. Here we have a point of interest, a building upon which emphasis is laid by a dark background of trees with the path leading the eye directly towards it. The eye is bound to see this building, and to return to rest thereon, however much it may wander over the sketch, and unfortunately it is central.



FIG. 1. MONOTONY OF SPACING.



FIG. 2. INTEREST TOO CENTRAL.

Equality It seems so obviously placed there, and it leaves spaces on either side equal in value. This arrangement is one of which to fight shy.



FIG. 3. EQUAL DIVISION.

Fig. 3 is a further example of poor composition. So much so that its weakness should be apparent at once, even to those who know

but little about composition. The tree is central, and the horizon cuts the shape into two similar portions above and below, so that we have four spaces all more or less similar. There is nothing to save this arrangement at all, it is about as hopeless as it can possibly be from the pictorial standpoint.

Fig. 4 is still another example of equality in spacing, though here the fault is perhaps less obvious to the tyro than in the previous examples. The dividing line runs diagonally through the space, leaving one half dark and the other light. It is also unfortunate that the line runs sharply downwards to the left, and so out of the picture. There seems to be no invitation to stay in this sketch, we are almost thrown out. This is another type of scheme which is better left alone.

Fig. 5 shows a further mistake which is often made by the novice. Two equal masses of trees grouped on either side of the centre. There is certainly a fascination about a scene of this nature, where we peer from the umbrageous depths of a wood into the glowing sunlight which falls with such brilliance upon



FIG. 4. DIAGONAL DIVISION—EQUAL MASSES.



FIG. 5. MONOTONOUS ARRANGEMENT.

the fields which lie beyond. It is so striking in its contrast, so picturesque in lighting that its appeal is necessarily a strong one, and our seeker after sketches feels so sure that he has at last found one ready made that he fails to realise the need for composition. The result is, equality of mass, equality in the spacing of the tree stems, and equality in the amounts of foreground on either side of the path, which again comes in the centre. The only saving clause (if I may use the term) is that the horizon is low, so that the narrow band of warm sunshine would not be bad in proportion if the rest of the sketch had not already upset any possibility of good spacing.

So far all our remarks have been of the negative order, they have been all "don'ts," but as previously stated, by knowing what not to do we ultimately discover what may be done with advantage.

We will now turn our attention to what, for lack of a better definition, we will call the "Significance of Line" in Landscape composition, for there is a suggestive quality in pure line which is dependent upon direction and upon the manner in which it is placed on the paper.

Significance
of
"line"

Horizontal
line

In Fig. 6 we have a series of horizontal lines varied by a few masses of black, and there can be little doubt that the impression conveyed is one of peace and quiet. This is feasible enough when we consider the conditions under which the horizontal line usually prevails. Calm seas, level clouds, flat peaceful meadows and recumbent figures may all be epitomised in horizontal lines. If then we wish our sketch to convey an impression of peace and calm the horizontal lines must needs predominate. This does not necessarily mean that vertical or curved lines are taboo in such a scheme, for it may easily be that the contrast afforded by the introduction of such lines will enhance the peaceful quality of the dominant horizontals instead of disturbing it. Further, a panel such as that shown in the figure, long and horizontal, will further help in producing this impression.

Vertical
line

The vertical line is the line of stability. Trees, architecture, erect figures and all up-standing things are vertical, rooted in the earth and rising at right angles to its surface, in direct obedience to the law of gravity. The sketch, Fig. 7, illustrates the suggestive quality of the vertical line. The upright piers supporting the structure above are rigid and static, they seem to rise strongly out of the water



FIG. 6. HORIZONTALS PREPONDERATING.



FIG. 7. DOMINANT VERTICALS.

without danger of collapse. This feeling of stability is at once destroyed when a line slopes, unless it is opposed by a corresponding line on the opposite slope, which tends to restore its stability. There is always a feeling of insecurity about an oblique line; we await its downfall with a certain amount of trepidation; it is therefore destructive of calm and security. In the sketch the sloping lines of the superstructure suggest the horizontal, besides being well supported by the piers.

Sloping
lines

The curved line is a line of movement, as exemplified in sweeping clouds, wind-blown trees, storm-beaten waves, and figures and drapery in motion. Fig. 8 contains some of this suggestion of movement. The wind-swayed trees, the curving shoreline, and billowing clouds all tend to produce an impression of motion which is further helped by the little figure stooping over the log in the foreground. The horizontal line at the base of the cliffs in the middle distance, and the vertical tree on the extreme right exercise a steadying influence by providing a contrast to the curves which might otherwise have become too suave. There is a further difference in the suggestive qualities of the broken line as opposed to the continuous one. Generally the line which breaks has a

Curved
lines

Contrast

Broken
lines



FIG. 8. LINES OF MOVEMENT.

more picturesque quality than the line which is even and uniform throughout. There is something left for the imagination to fill in when the line stops and goes on again, it is equivalent to the charm of a "lost and found" edge in painting, whereas in the other case the insistence upon its whole length leaves the imagination untouched. In his "Treatise on Landscape Painting in Water Colours," David Cox says "Abrupt and irregular lines are productive of a grand or stormy effect, while serenity is the result of even and horizontal lines, where no roughness or inter-sections appear to invade the mild harmony of Beauty."

Fig. 9 might be regarded as a rough composition note, the sort of tentative planning which is advisable before attempting a finished work. The student of Nature should never be without a sketchbook, and in that sketchbook should be many little notes of this type. In this sketch there are a series of broken lines suggesting a pathway which leads the eye onwards even as the moorland track tempts the traveller. In the middle distance just where the pathway bends is a mass of dark trees which arrests the eye, forming, so to speak, the *raison d'être* for such a scheme. Without that dark spot the whole arrangement would be

Sketchbook

pointless. To test this, cover the trees with a piece of paper and note how empty and vapid the thing looks. Further analysis shows us that the roadway is placed well to the right of the space, leaving the dominant mass of foreground on the left. The lines of the road are balanced by the cloud lines in the upper left-hand corner. The sky space is wider than that



FIG. 9. COMPOSITION NOTE.

occupied by the moorland, while the dark spot of interest is placed on the left (as previously stated), at the bend of the roadway, which leads from the bottom right-hand corner. The scheme being a light one makes the black valuable as a contrast, which helps to give emphasis to the centre of interest, and so to provide a keynote to the arrangement. Naturally

in a scheme where dark tones predominate equal value would be given to a light note ; it is simply a form of contrast, and contrast is intensified variety. It might be advisable here to consider the question of line composition a little further. In a sketch or picture we may take it that there are three, or perhaps four elements, as the case may be. Line, mass or shape, and tone, in the monochrome, with the addition of colour in the polychrome.

Contrast

The first consideration is the planning of the scheme within the limits of our space, the disposition of our principal lines and masses, with due regard for the shape into which they must fall. The lines must group themselves pleasantly, leading the eye into the picture mainly towards the focal centre or primary interest. The fact that the lines lead towards a certain point suggests convergence or radiation, which introduces another principle of value in composition. Lines which converge are more interesting than parallel lines, the reason being that the space between is a varied space instead of a uniform one, as between parallel lines. Variety again. The architect is aware of this, for when he desires to make an attractive drawing for the benefit of a client he generally puts his building "into perspective"

Planning

Radiation

instead of showing an elevation composed of parallel lines. Not that parallel lines are taboo, or never to be introduced into a sketch : sometimes they are useful for emphasis. The echo of a line by another drawn parallel to it adds to the value of both, and is often of use in a sketch. But generally converging lines are more pleasant, and consequently of more service in a composition. Fig. 10 is an instance. The point towards which they converge is important for here is usually the centre of interest.

Centre
of
interest

What this centre of interest or focal centre may be depends of course upon the nature of the work in hand. It may be a figure, a group of figures, a cart, a house, a farm or other building, or it may be merely a patch of colour. Whatever it may be it affords a centre around which our scheme is built, and upon which the eye rests. Without this point our sketch will be flat and uninteresting. It will be found, when looking at a picture that however the eye may wander over its surface it will always return to one spot, and this spot is the focal centre. This is quite logical when we come to consider it. In arranging or composing the lines in our picture we endeavour to group them so that they lead the eye in a given direction, to some particular part of the scheme.



FIG. 10. CONVERGING LINES.

This saves confusion and makes for unity. But unless there is something worthy of attention at this particular spot the spectator is justified in considering that he has been duped, that he has been lured into looking at something unworthy of his attention. There is bound to be a sense of incompleteness, even of disappointment about a sketch which lacks this focal centre, this point of interest whereon the scheme may hang. In our sketch then we are aiming at three things so far. Inequality or variety in spacing, an agreeable harmonious line arrangement, and a point where the lines culminate and the interest centres.

Fig. 10 shows a group of converging lines suggesting a river bank, with a group of barges and a patch of shadow on the bank. This dark shadowed portion forms the keynote or focal centre, compelling attention, while the human interest attached to the barges is a further inducement for the eye to dwell at this point. All lines converge towards this region, which is emphasized by being dark in a light scheme. Note the unequal spacing of earth and sky, the dominating area for foreground with a smaller one for sky, and a lesser one still for the river.

Fig. 11 is a coast sketch with the lines of the water, and the tendency of the grass tufts

carrying the eye towards the dark patch of rock on the left. Beyond, the cliffs give a series of lines which again help to carry the eye towards the dark rocks. Note the lack of continuity in the lines, especially in the tufts of grass, where it is their general trend that leads the eye into the picture. It would not be wise to insist too much upon this trend, or to place

Trend



FIG. 11. "LINES" SUGGESTED.

the grass in too orderly a line. The result would be too obviously designed, whereas in landscape design the methods must not stand revealed. "The art of art is to conceal the art."

Fig. 12 is a country lane, bordered with hedges and fringed with grass, while beyond is

a hillside mapped out into fields. The eye is caught at once by the dark tree patch in the middle distance, which is obviously the focal centre. This patch of dark we feel to be just



FIG. 12. LINE PLANNING.

at the end of the lane, or at least just beyond the bend to which we are led by the lines of the roadway, the grass border, and the hedges. Note again the convergence of the lines and also the double curve in the lane which, after

sweeping towards the right, bends back towards the left, leaving us plenty of space to wander in without getting beyond the bounds of the picture. Had the path continued towards the right it would have run into the border line, and come to a sudden stop, which is calculated to engender the same sort of feeling as would an insurmountable wall rising suddenly in our path. It is not good to have lines of importance running out of the picture. We should be able to feel that we are free to roam onwards into the distance without let or hindrance. For this reason it is not wise to let walls or fences run across the sketch unless there is a gap or obvious way through.

Impediments

Fig. 13 is slightly different in that two masses are balanced one against the other. The tree stems in the foreground, while obviously larger and heavier, do not force the attention like the dark trees in the distance. The farther group occupy less space than the near one, and yet there is a suggestion of size about them which enables them to hold their own without difficulty. The line arrangement is worthy of note, for this is an interesting group. The bank in the foreground, from which rise the three near stems, is distinct from the middle distance, yet the line sweeping from the

Balance

right-hand corner and then round the margin of the river, helps to connect the two planes. If this line be blotted out, the composition becomes less complete, there is obviously something lacking. The eye rests upon the dark



FIG. 13. BALANCE.

Squares patch of trees in the distance, so that here lies the focal centre. The bounding shape in this case is a square, which is a rather more difficult shape to fill than an oblong. The four boundary lines in the square are all equal, while in the oblong we have two pairs of sides of unequal

length, so that in the square we start with equality, while the oblong is varied in its proportions, which proportions may differ considerably as the range of possibilities is fairly wide. Oblongs



FIG. 14. L SHAPED COMPOSITION.

Fig. 14 is a more or less vertical mass rising from a horizontal base, something like the letter L. Compare this with Fig. 3, where

the vertical line is central, and note the greater interest given by the varied spacing. A low horizon gives a wide sky space above and to the right, with two smaller spaces to the left on either side of the trees. The landscape is simply the converging lines of lane and hedge-row, the whole scheme focussing in the patch of shadow suggesting possibilities farther on. A figure in or near the shadow would certainly enhance the interest, but for the present the dark shape in a scheme which is mainly light serves very well. This diagram helps to illustrate the fact that a sketch can be made from quite simple materials. There is sufficient here, properly handled, to make a good picture. Fig. 15 shows a wide stretch of open shore where the light middle distance is thrown into relief by a dark foreground and a couple of dark masses to the left and right. The lines curving through the road near at hand, and round the margin of the water, carries the eye into the picture. The interest centres around the group of dark trees running down to the shore, and in colour this group would be emphasized still more by a subtle gradation of tone in sea and sky, leaving the strongest lights in opposition to these trees. In line such gradation is hardly possible, a great deal must needs be left to the imagination, for our medium permits of little



FIG. 15. TONE COMPOSITION.

more than a suggestion of line and a broad indication of tone. I am speaking, of course, of these diagrams which are drawn with brush and ink, rather than of the elaborate studies which are quite within the range of the black and white draughtsman.

Pen and
ink

Tone studies can be wrought with pen and ink, given the skill and time, but a bold simplicity in such work is often more pleasing than great elaboration. After we have settled upon our line arrangement and decided upon the main scheme of our composition, the next consideration is the balance of mass. This has already been touched upon, for the various stages overlap each other, and, strictly speaking, we should be able to see the thing we desire with the mind's eye from the very start, but in dealing with the subject it is only possible to take one stage at a time. Fig. 16 is a rough suggestion of tree masses arranged on either side of the panel, with a peep of distance seen beyond. Note the difference in the weight of the masses on either side, that on the right being the dominant one. To avoid heaviness, a slender stem tufted with foliage here and there has been drawn across the larger mass. Generally speaking the white is more precious than the black in this scheme because more scanty. The

Value of
light in
dark
scheme



FIG. 16 BALANCE OF BLACK AND WHITE.

focal centre is just around the foot of the dark tree in the middle distance on the right and a splash of bright colour or a figure placed here in a colour sketch would emphasize the point. The variety in the sizes of the white shapes should be noted, together with the toning of



FIG. 17. COMPOSITION OF MASSES.

the upper sky and the near foreground. There is a sense of stability and also of dignity here, as the vertical line predominates though slightly modified by curved ones.

Fig. 17 is another example of tree masses balanced against each other with the heavier

mass on the right. The interest centres on the white patch at the foot of the near trees, where a few lines suggesting a figure have been introduced. Again the white is of greater value than the black, because there is less of it. An interesting point arises in connection with this sketch. There is inequality of mass, for the nearer group of trees easily outweighs the farther group. The horizontal divisions are also varied, yet the centre of interest comes about midway between the two sides. When planning a composition this is a situation that one endeavours to avoid for the chief interest, yet, though theoretically the geometric centre is not a good position, it sometimes happens that there is no other place quite so suitable for our interest. We may analyse the scheme and be able to find no fault, save that it calls for a strong note just where we have been taught not to place it. When placed there it does not jar ; there is still no offence in it. This simply goes to prove an earlier statement that there are no laws of the " Medes and Persians " in picture making, and if the centre seems the right place for it, let it be placed central. In Fig. 18 the experiment has been made of shifting the focal centre away from the middle, giving further weight to the trees on the right and correspondingly diminish-

Centrality
of
interest

ing those on the left. It is a useful exercise to make a careful comparison between these two examples, for the purpose of deciding which is the better arrangement. On the whole perhaps we may be inclined to decide in favour of



FIG. 18. COMPOSITION OF MASSES.

Fig. 18, but further experiments might usefully be made by placing a little figure, cut out of paper, in various positions to discover where it is most valuable. Again it is an excellent plan to fit the same composition or the same elements

into different shapes to see which is the most suitable, for often an arrangement which looks poor in one shape will be quite pleasing when adapted to another. For some subjects, especially those of a tranquil, peaceful nature, an oblong lying horizontally is best. For others, especially those with a vertical tendency, an oblong standing upright is most suitable, while for others a square, or even a circle, may be the most fitting shape.

When we start upon a sketching excursion we generally have a block, or a sheet of paper with us. This is usually rectangular and easily employed, either vertical or horizontal. By leaving a portion at top or bottom a square results, and these are the most common, and also the most useful shapes. When considering our subject it is often a matter for much deliberation as to how we shall use our rectangle, whether upright, horizontal or squared. If we take a small card and cut an opening therein, similar (though much smaller) in proportion to the paper we shall use, it will help us materially in settling our difficulty. The card is held between the eye and the landscape, which is studied through the aperture we have cut therein. By moving this card towards or away

View
finder

from the eye we are able to include as much of the scene as we desire, while all the rest is shut out by the margin of the card. The "Claude Lorraine" glass is useful, as it contains a diminishing glass and a dark glass which lowers the tones of the landscape, but such an instrument is not always available, while the aperture above mentioned can easily be cut in a piece of spare card or even paper. To the student who is anxious to obtain a good composition this is very valuable.

Fig. 19 is another example of mass composition. The black tree obviously dominates the scheme, and compels attention being further aided by the lines which lead the eye towards it. Just below the tree we catch a glimpse of some buildings which in colour would call for a note of emphatic hue to concentrate the interest in this region. Note carefully the balance of black and white, for upon this depends the whole effect of this arrangement. Needless to say the restriction to two tones, black and white only, makes the task of composition a difficult one, though at the same time it forces home the value of shape and balance of mass. With a wider range of tone it would be easier to lay emphasis upon desired portions, while with colour it would be easier still, but increased

Two
tones



FIG. 19. MASS ARRANGEMENT.

range means also added difficulty in handling, as it is safer to tackle one task at a time. The necessity for thoughtful balance of mass makes these exercises in two tones only, of the greatest value to students of pictorial design. If you can get a pleasing group of masses by such simple means, you are far more likely to get good results when handling an almost unlimited range of tone and colour. On the other hand, if you cannot plan your masses when they are almost the only consideration, it is very doubtful if you will be able to do so when the subtleties of tone, colour and texture are added to your task. Further, by this method you learn to economise and to plan your tone schemes as simply as possible, reserving a little at either end of the scale for final emphasis. It is an excellent plan to make sketches of this type as often as possible, because of the fine feeling for design they are calculated to engender, and there can be no doubt as to the value of design in landscape work. The beginner may be inclined to doubt its value in this connection, but a careful analysis of the work of the best landscape painters along the lines of the foregoing remarks will soon remove such doubts.

For analysis of this description reproductions of pictures are better perhaps than the originals, for the colour plays an enormous part in such

Economy

Analysis

charm as they possess, while in the reproduction they stand or fall according to their balance of tone and mass. The beginner is advised to approach colour somewhat warily, and with steps that are not too hasty, for the road to good picture making is not very short or particularly easy, and it is better to make sure of one's ground before taking the next step, lest disappointment ensue. For this reason the amateur had better do a considerable amount of work in monochrome, whether it be ink, pencil, charcoal, or wash, even after he has started in colour. For these exercises tend to drive home the necessity for harmony of line and balance of tone and mass, in other words—design, in the make-up of a picture, which one is apt to forget when splashing on colour. Further, if a colour sketch fails to satisfy, it might be of advantage to seek for the reason not in the colour so much as in the design and arrangement of the work.

Design

Fig. 20 is obviously dependent upon the pattern of the dark stems, branches and foliage, against the sky, and the reflections against the water. Here again are simply two tones with a third hinted at in the line treatment of the bank. It is the pattern that counts, and the balance of white against black. It is an example



FIG. 20. PATTERN IN LANDSCAPE.

of space filling, which every sketch we make, whether slight or elaborate, should be. This does not necessarily mean that our sketch of a certain place shall be so regardless of the topography as to be unrecognisable. It simply means that first of all we choose our point of view with care and thought, secondly that we select and reject the material offered to us by Nature with discrimination, aiming always at a harmonious disposition of this material within our space, and finally that by dint of emphasizing one passage and subordinating another we achieve the pictorial without violating topography.

Point of
view

Another fact that needs consideration is the wonderful gamut of effects that Nature produces with the same scene. Grey skies, mists, sunsets, sunrises, full light or dim, all presenting something entirely different to our gaze, with precisely the same material. Here is scope for choice; which of these evanescent effects is best suited for our purpose? Which conveys best the essence, the poetry of the scene? "All the weary miles and tons of space and bulk left out, and the spirit or moral of it contracted into the cunning stroke of the pencil." Turner made wonderful pictures, sheer joys in colour and composition, taking what

Turner

David
Cox

liberties he wished, but always preserving the spirit of the landscape. With a few strokes a master hand can depict more of the essential facts of the scene, than an uninspired, painstaking painter can convey to us on a huge canvas with months of labour. David Cox was always sensitive to the spirit of a landscape ; he was deeply affected by its prevailing mood, if I may use the term, and, in vigorous direct strokes, with no unnecessary detail, he produced those exquisite renderings of woodland, stream and meadow which are so full of atmosphere and so essentially English. He himself has written about "Landscape painting in water colours," and has much excellent advice to offer. Read what he says : " Thus, a cottage or a village scene requires a soft and simple admixture of tones, calculated to produce pleasure without astonishment, awakening all the delightful sensations of the bosom without trenching on the nobler province of feeling. On the contrary the structures of greatness and antiquity should be marked by a character of awful sublimity suited to the dignity of the subject, indenting on the mind a reverential and permanent impression, and giving at once a corresponding and unequivocal grandeur to the picture. In the language of the pencil, as well as of the pen, sublime ideas are expressed

by lofty and obscure images, such as in pictures, objects of fine majestic forms, lofty towers, mountains, lakes margined with stately trees, rugged rocks, and clouds rolling their shadowy forms in broad masses over the scene. Much depends upon the classification of the objects, which should wear a magnificent uniformity, and much on the colouring, the tones of which should be deep and impressive." From this it would seem that David Cox was more concerned with the spirit of the scene, with its "Visual Music," than he was with the production of illustrations suitable for a guide book.

CHAPTER II

TONES

Varied
tone
studies

HAVING dealt at some length with line and mass composition, we will turn our attention to tone. Our previous essays have been mainly in two tones to illustrate the value of shape and mass; we now pass on to more complex tone arrangements.

Fig. 21 introduces a few simple tones in pen and ink, treated broadly and simply. The vertical tree form, heavier above than below, is a good example of stability and balance, for there is no sense of insecurity despite the greater weight above. The tree itself is in two tones only, with a touch of white here and there where the branches are in evidence. The hill in the background is grey, but lighter than the tree, and provides a solid foundation for the weight above. The roadway and fence are running down hill, away from the spectator, and the focal centre is obviously where the white road dips to lose itself in the dark tone somewhat to

the right. Here again the material is scanty, serving to illustrate the fact that a sketch does not depend upon the quantity of material introduced into it. More depends upon the

selection and arrangement than upon the amount employed.



FIG. 21. TONES.

Fig. 22 is a more elaborate tone study, though if analysed it will be found to consist of about four tones. Here the general tone is grey, out of which shine a few valuable shapes in

Value of
white
shapes

white, which shapes are accentuated by coming into juxtaposition with the darkest portions of the scheme. The lines in the roadway lead towards the right, then turn sharply

Stability towards the church, around which, and the intervening buildings, centres the interest. There is a strong suggestion of stability in this arrangement, composed, as it is, mainly of vertical lines. Even the spire, bounded by two inclined lines, is yet vertical, because of the symmetry of the sloping lines. The bare tree in the centre and the evergreen on the right, together with the roadway, provide a little curvature which helps to modify the rigidity of the general arrangement.

Pencil
and
wash

Fig. 23 is a simple tone study in pencil and wash. Here again the tones are few, not more than five. The white here, upon which again the effect mainly depends, are shapes of morning sunlight falling upon the walls of the village. An effect of this sort must be sketched very rapidly, as the shadows change almost before you have time to see their shapes. Note the variety in the sizes of the white spaces, and also the concentration of interest upon the dark tree mass on the left, where a couple of figures are suggested. The trend of the lines is towards that spot, being helped considerably by the "perspective" of the buildings. This sketch seems static and peaceful, restful and yet secure, which is a feeling engendered by the typical English village.



FIG. 22. TONE COMPOSITION.



FIG. 23. SIMPLE TONE SCHEME.



FIG. 24. CONCENTRATION OF LIGHT.

Fig. 24 is a tone study pure and simple. The forms are all vague and indeterminate, the effect depending largely upon the white moon and its reflection in the water. The pathway and the fence are mere suggestions with just sufficient definition to carry the eye into the sketch. Note the balance of the dark tree forms in comparison with the other grey masses. The lights are very small and consequently sharp. The interstices in the foliage of the trees help to give lightness and interest to what might otherwise be too flat a tone. The vague softness of this sketch should be compared with the definite shapes and outlines in the earlier ones. There is here more of suggestion of atmosphere, in addition to the pattern which formed our primary concern before. The edges are not by any means sharp, they are "lost and found," to use a term common amongst artists. There is, in fact, a great deal left to the imagination of the spectator in work of this nature, and such being the case he fills in what he desires and is consequently gratified with the result, assuming, of course, that he has any imagination at all.

Vague
forms

Imagination

PENCIL

In our study of tone, and our efforts to appreciate tone values, there is no instrument

Range

Varied
uses

more useful than the pencil. From a light tender grey to a deep velvety black its scale ranges, and it is simply a case of varying the pressure in order to get just that part of the scale which the occasion demands. For a quick note out comes the pencil, for a careful study it again comes into play, while for a sketch in colour it is used for blocking in the main masses and for settling the composition, prior to the application of colour. It is invaluable for making little composition sketches, whether they are made to add to your store, to acquire skill and practice in this important department, or as a preliminary to the finished sketch, for studies intended for future use in pictorial work, or with a view to learning something of the form, tone, texture, and make-up of an object, the pencil is hard to beat. Studies of this type should be made whenever possible, as there is nothing that teaches the essentials so readily or so thoroughly as a careful drawing. It makes a deeper impression on the memory, and consequently adds to the store of material upon which the artist must always draw when producing a picture. For a landscape painting is really compounded of all the scenes which the painter has observed that in any way bears upon the work in hand. Memory and association cannot fail to play their parts, and according



FIGS. 25-27. PENCIL NOTES OF COMPOSITIONS.

to the vividness of his memory and the depth of his impression will be the quality of his work.

We see only what we are capable of seeing, and the more there is stored in the mind the keener is the vision. In this connection a quotation from John Addington Symonds might not be out of place. In "A Venetian Medley" he writes: "These first impressions of Venice are true. Indeed, they are inevitable. They abide and form a glowing background for all subsequent pictures, toned more austere, and painted in more lasting hues of truth upon the brain. Those who have never felt Venice at all, who have not known this primal rapture, or who perhaps expected more of colour, more of melodrama, from a scene which Nature and the art of man has made the richest in these qualities." From this we gather that the first impression was so strong that it tinged all he saw of Venice afterwards.

Capacity
for
seeing

Figs. 25, 26 and 27 are small composition notes made with a view to future use: quick notes rapidly drawn with a 5 B pencil upon smooth paper. They are broad in treatment and aim rather at tone and line composition than careful detailed study. Such sketches as these should be very plentiful in the student's note-book.

Fig. 28 is rather more elaborate, being a study rather than a note. These drawings should be made to supplement the slighter composition sketch.

CHARCOAL

Range

Charcoal is a medium with a wide range of tone, and easy to handle. Tones can be quickly applied, and as quickly erased or softened. Its scale extends from a rich black to a grey, which is a mere veiling of the white paper. Its drawbacks are, that it smudges easily, and does not work well upon paper not specially prepared for it, as Michallet or Ingres.

Paper
fixing

Whatman paper is safe enough, but on cartridge it is very doubtful what will happen. The first difficulty can be overcome by spraying with Fixative (gum-mastic or white shellac dissolved in spirit). The second is surmounted by choosing the right paper, or by carefully testing a sheet before starting any work of importance.

Application
of tone

For studies in tone, charcoal is certainly valuable, for should the scheme be mainly grey, the tone can be quickly applied and rubbed in uniformly with the fingers or a piece of chamois leather used gently. Light shapes may then be lifted out with the chamois, which takes off all but a very thin film if used clean and with a moderate pressure. Where a white is needed



F.J.G.

Gloucester Cathedral from the Pool

FIG. 28. STUDY IN PENCIL.



FIG. 29. TONE SCHEME (CHARCOAL).



FIG. 30. TONE ARRANGEMENT (CHARCOAL).

rubber must be employed. As a sketching medium it is quite useful except for its tendency to rub, but a bottle of Fixative and a spray soon obviates this. It is certainly of great use in thinking out tone compositions, as it permits of more experiment than does pencil. The ease with which lines and tones can be applied or erased makes it possible to test a number of arrangements without damage to the paper.

No. 29 is a tone study in charcoal. The effect is soft, and the texture given by the paper not unpleasant. Note the shape of the masses, and the concentration upon the light in the sky and water, which is further contrasted by the stems and branches of the trees.

Fig. 30 is another charcoal sketch in a very limited range of tones. The tracery of trees forms a framework of some interest, as the interstices give a lightness and a variety which would certainly be lacking in a more solid mass. The cumulus introduces a strong note of light, giving relief to the sheep, which form the focal centre of the scheme. Charcoal and water colour can be combined with rich effect. The grey of the charcoal helps to soften the colour and to bind the whole together. It is necessary to keep the charcoal drawing fairly delicate in order that the colour may not be overwhelmed,

Charcoal
and
water
colour

Pastels and it is advisable to fix it before applying the colour. This method permits of the use of fairly pure colour, as all the necessary grey is provided by the drawing. It also combines well with pastels, and is invariably used to rough in the main theme before applying the colours.

PEN AND INK

Elements Pen and ink is a good sketching medium, and owing to its use for commercial and illustrative purposes well worth practising. The elements at our command here are lines, dots, and blots or solid shapes of black. Limited as this may seem, there are really great possibilities, as the combinations of lines, dots and blots, and the tones and textures obtainable thereby are varied and numerous. According to the amount of white left between the blacks, in other words, the proportion of black to white practically any tone from solid black to a delicate light grey is obtainable. Textures of great variety can also be produced.

Tone and texture In pen and ink there are, broadly speaking, two aims or objects in view. One is the rendering of tone by the comparatively quick system of drawing a series of lines, usually sloping from the right to the left, as the hand moves most easily in

Aims
Pictorial

this direction. These lines are drawn closer together or farther apart as the depth of tone required may demand.

Fig. 31 is a rapid sketch illustrative of this style of work. The lines are used as economically as possible, and the blacks applied with rapidity. Fig. 21 is another example, with a little more variety of tone suggested. The other method is to essay the reproduction of texture in addition to tone. Drawings executed in this way are far richer and more decorative than those which rely merely upon straight lines. In the "Highway and Byways Series" there are a number of books illustrated by F. L. Griggs which contain some exquisite examples of this mode of rendering landscape. The student is advised to study these drawings. Others in the same series are illustrated by Joseph Pennell and Hugh Thomson, both of whom have produced their effects by means entirely different. A careful analysis of good modern illustration will convince the beginner of the infinite possibilities that lie in pen and ink work. Franklin Booth—an American artist—has developed a fine style of decorative work based on the technique of wood engraving (unless I am mistaken), where the white shapes left between the blacks are

Wood
engraving

equal in importance with the blacks themselves : even more so perhaps. In his drawings there is always a rich suggestion of colour and a rare sense of decoration. This style of work is one



FIG. 31. QUICK SKETCH IN PEN AND INK.

that the beginner is strongly advised to study. It is wise to give at least as much consideration to the white spaces as to the black lines, dots or blots. The revival of wood block cutting

and wood engraving has done much to bring this type of work to the fore of late, and examples may be seen in practically any book or periodical with artistic claims. Imitations of Booth's work are frequently met with, but in the majority of cases his mannerisms have been exaggerated, while much of the quality of his colour suggestion and his decoration have been missed. It is useful to copy the work of good men in order to learn how they produced their effects, but it is better to develop a personal style than to adopt one second-hand. The technique should grow out of the subject in hand. The rendering of texture in trees, grass, buildings, skies, water, etc., should be evolved from careful study of these things, based, if you will, upon concurrent study of how others have rendered them, but always with the natural objects as your models. Endeavour to make your statement a personal one, try to express how these objects in Nature have affected you, rather than how the same thing in Nature affected some other person. There is no merit in copying an essay, but there is in writing another essay based upon it. An echo is always less striking, less distinct, than the sound it echoes, and a copy is always somewhere in the rear of the work copied.

White
shapes
between
blacks

Technique

Copying

Colour

Fig. 32 is an attempt to render tone and texture, also to suggest colour, and at the same time to make a pleasing composition. The white cloud throws the foliage into relief, while upon the grey sky it is less conspicuous. The black in the distance against the white, towards which the eye is led by the path, together with the man and horse, give a note of interest to the arrangement. As black and white work is very largely executed with a view to ultimate reproduction it is safer to use a fairly bold line from the outset. It is easier to reproduce and less liable to lead to disappointment when printed. Further, it tends to develop a vigorous, decisive style and more accurate drawing than does a thin, scratchy line. Exercises treated in the manner of the compositions shown earlier in this book are excellent training for the future pen and ink drawing. Such work is calculated to teach the value of pattern, balance of tone and mass, and a just appreciation of well-grouped lines. Very frequently we feel the need for a figure, animal, or other interest in a sketch, and it may be that we are at a loss for suitable material. It is therefore essential that we make many studies of this type in our sketch book, so that we may not have far to look when the need arises.

Bold line

Pattern

Figures

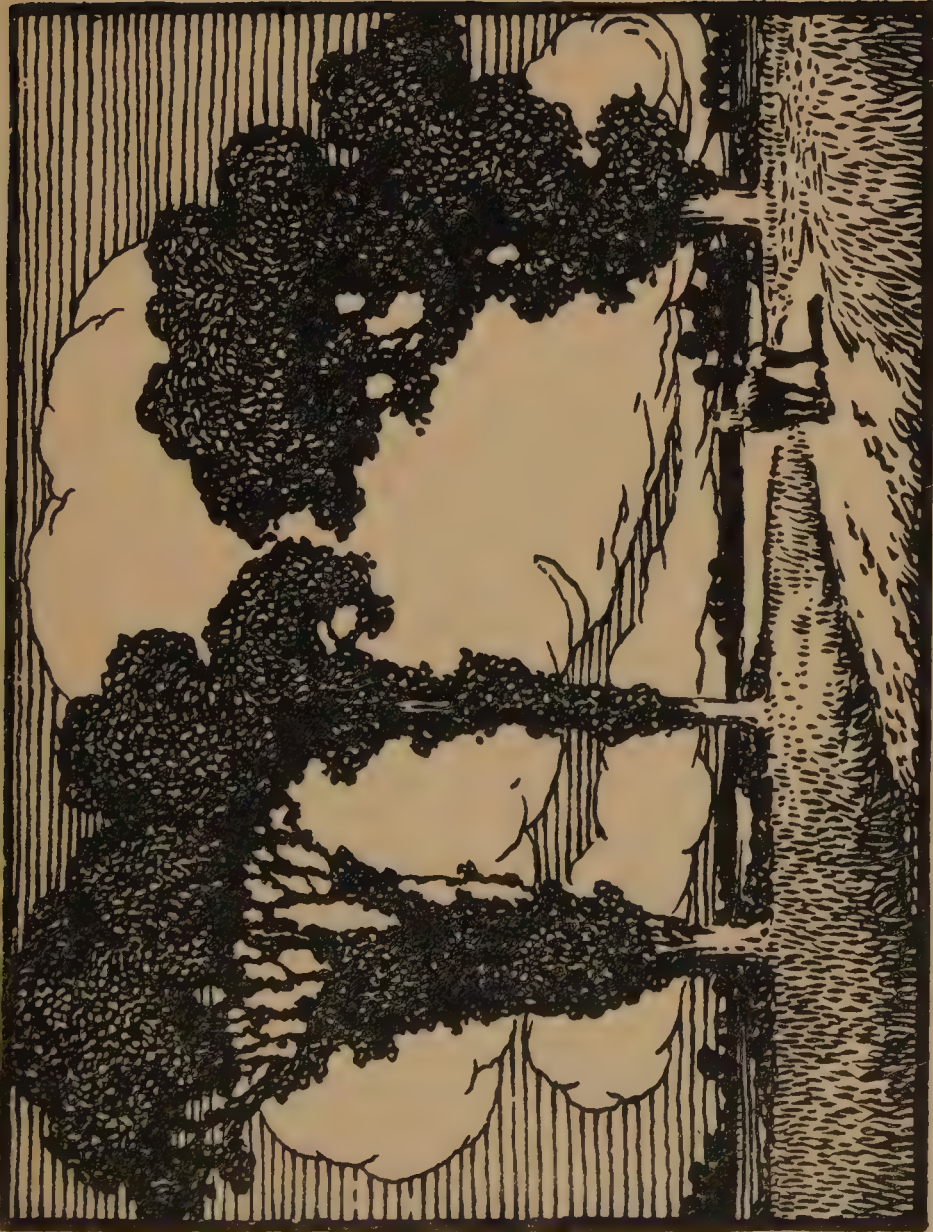


FIG. 32. TONE AND TEXTURE.

Plate 33 illustrates a few such studies to indicate the sort of thing that is useful. You cannot have too many of these, and they should be supplemented by animals, carts and such other details as you may meet with which seem in any way likely to be useful.

Pen and
ink
with colour

Pen and ink can be combined with colour quite satisfactorily, especially in decorative work. Where this is done, however, the ink should be "waterproof," otherwise it will spread badly when the colour is applied. The best method is to make an ink drawing first, and then apply the colour, but it is quite possible to reverse this order and get good work. It is better to make drawings so executed of the frankly decorative order, as outlines in Nature are non-existent, and so is black. Pen and ink combines well with monochrome, as lamp black or sepia, and excellent results are obtainable by washing in broad tones on a drawing which has been outlined in ink.

WATER COLOURS

The introduction of colour adds considerably to the difficulties of our task. In addition to line, tone and mass or shape, we now include that exceedingly subtle element colour. For present purposes it is sufficient to regard colour



FIG. 33. NOTES OF FIGURES.

Pigment as pigment, without entering into its nature as dependent upon light, for upon our use of these pigments, and the manner in which we apply them will depend entirely the results we achieve. The first thing is to choose our colours and materials. To commence with, somewhere about a dozen colours will be sufficient. Afterwards this number may be supplemented or changed according to the taste and desire of the painter, but a start must be made somewhere, and so the following list is recommended: Cobalt, **Colours** Prussian blue, French ultramarine, vermillion, light red, alizarin crimson, yellow ochre, Indian yellow, aureolin, burnt sienna, sepia, and black. With these colours much may be done, and it is by no means a bad plan to work with a limited palette until its possibilities have been thoroughly exploited. But whenever the need is felt for another colour, there is absolutely no reason why it should not be added to the box. Further, when you have become acquainted with your pigments, and learnt something of their possibilities, it is often inspiring to add a new colour to the list, it may help to suggest fresh schemes. In addition to the above list I have found the following of great value. **Supple-
mentary
colours** Raw sienna, raw and burnt umber, Hooker's green, viridian, brown madder, terre-verte, Payne's grey, Rimington's sky grey (sold by Newman's), and indigo.

Some teachers advocate the use of a very restricted palette, but if the need for a colour is felt there is no apparent reason why it should not be employed. The only danger lies in employing colours which are fugitive. This may seem of no importance to the modest beginner who does not expect to produce work which will be required to last, but later on when he does arrive at proficiency, it is a pity if he has put his faith in fugitive pigments. In choosing a colour box it is safer to get a fairly good one with at least sixteen compartments for half pans of colour. Brushes should be of sable hair, as camel is very unsatisfactory, being limp and lifeless. At least four of these will be required, Nos. 12, 8, 5, 3, being useful sizes. When purchased these brushes will have sharp points, which, while useful in the smaller ones for fine work, is somewhat in the nature of a drawback in the larger ones. In time they wear down to a broad, useful tip, but as this takes too long it is quicker to burn them. First damp your brush and draw the hair to a point, then with a lighted match singe off a little at the tip. For blobbing in the texture of foliage, and, in fact, for producing any rich rounded forms a brush so treated is invaluable. It is better to have the largest brush flat instead of round. We have now colour and brushes ; it

Fugitive
colours

Box

Brushes

Tips of
brushes

Paper only remains to choose our paper. All sorts of paper can be pressed into service, from the common wrapping paper to the highest priced material on the market, but as fairly good paper works more easily and safely than a common one it is wiser to use the better material. There are various makes and thicknesses of paper on the market from which choice can be made. A fairly stout paper is preferable to a thin one, as it permits of considerable sponging, washing out, and generally working upon, with no ill

Surface effects to the surface. For some years I have used a 140 lb. paper, which I obtain from the Hayle Mill, Maidstone. It is excellent to work upon, and is made in "Not," "Rough" and "Smooth" surfaces. Of these the "Not" is the most useful for general work. A lighter paper of 72 lbs. to the ream answers very well if strained, and has the advantage of being cheaper. "Whatmans" is a serviceable material, and so is "Arnold," but the student will in time discover the one which suits him best. So much for materials. A few experiments will certainly help the tyro to find out how these things behave when in use. He is often astonished at the number of tints that can be obtained with a moderate palette by mixing the pigments in varying proportions. With regard to the admixture of colour a word of

warning may not be amiss. Two will mix quite clearly ; three generally gives a pure enough tint ; four is becoming risky, while beyond this there is an imminent danger of arriving at mud instead of colour. A few of the more common mixtures are as follows. Cobalt and light red gives a purple grey, which is neutralised by the addition of yellow ochre. This grey tends towards red, yellow or blue, according to the predominant pigment. Cobalt and vermilion is still grey, but a little warmer and more purple, and is valuable for distances. Cobalt and alizarin crimson give a decided purple. Prussian blue and Indian yellow yield a fairly vivid green. Prussian blue and yellow ochre is less vivid, while with burnt sienna this blue makes a deep, rich green, very suitable for trees. Yellow ochre with light red gives a dull orange or brick colour, useful for buildings ; with vermilion it is brighter and more vivid. Aureolin with Prussian blue is a bright green, with cobalt it is softer, but still a strong green, with vividian it gives an excellent suggestion of sunlit grass. These are a very few of the tints obtainable, crudely suggested, for the range and gradation of tints possible in each case could not be described. Experiment alone can give you any idea of what can be done. Try mixing the tints in a pan or saucer first of all, then mix

Broken
colour

them on the paper, or rather allow them to mix themselves on the paper, and compare the results. The variety and broken quality of the tint produced by blobbing two colours side by side, and allowing them to mix themselves is altogether more fascinating than the flat tint mixed prior to its application to the paper. After a few essays in colour mixing the reader who has had no experience of water colour—and we assume that this book is in the hands of such—had better have a little practice in laying flat washes. It looks quite easy to put a flat tint on a sheet of paper, but things are not always what they seem. The general fault is an endeavour to cover the paper with too little colour, or with a brush that is almost dry.

Washes of
colour

In water colour note that the water is placed first, giving it primary importance, and such is its correct place. The advice most needed by the average novice is “don’t forget the water.” Naturally, it is easier to float a wash of colour over paper which is flat and taut than over paper which crinkles and cockles as soon as it becomes moist. Our paper should, therefore, be either mounted upon card, or strained. For sketching I find the following plan useful, as it is quite light and portable, while enabling you to carry five or six sheets of paper quite easily.

Canvas

Procure a small canvas, say 14 inches by 10

inches. This is a valuable size, because an Imperial sheet of paper measures 31 inches by 22 inches. If we cut this sheet into four parts it gives us a size somewhat larger than the canvas. Having cut the paper, place it in water until it has become soft and pliable. Loosen the wedges of the canvas, lay your paper face downwards, and the canvas on the top. Turn the margin of the paper over to the frame of the canvas and fasten in position with small tin-tacks. As many as six sheets can be mounted at once, and when sketching this is a decided advantage. When dry the paper should be as taut as a drum. Should it be at all slack, however, this can be rectified by a few taps on the wedges. Should a drawing board be preferred, or the only means available, the paper should be strained in this manner. Lay your paper face downwards on the board, and turn up the four edges to the depth of an inch or thereabouts. Now reverse the paper and sponge the back with water, leaving the "turn-up" dry. When well damped turn it right side up again, and with paste, glue or other adhesive stick the edge, which has been left dry, to the board, taking great care to see that it adheres properly while drying. The advantage of this method is that the edge being damped only with the adhesive, dries before the centre.

Straining
paper

Washes

Paper when wet expands, contracting again as it dries, so that the edge being fast, the centre is bound to be well stretched. It can easily be understood that if the whole sheet were wetted, and then additional moisture put on the margin in the form of adhesive, the centre would dry first and pull the still damp adhesive away from the board. Brushes, colour, and paper in hand, we can commence work. I have suggested that a good beginning might be made by laying on a few washes. This may either be applied to the dry paper or the surface may first be damped. Needless to say the latter is the easier process, though not always practicable. In either case our method of procedure is precisely the same. In order that we may learn to control our elusive medium as early as possible we will first of all mark out a rectangular shape over which to float the wash. Mix the desired tint, of sufficient quantity to cover the space if a flat wash is desired, for otherwise it is difficult to get the same tint again. With broken colour you may experiment later. Tilt the paper slightly, so that the colour will run downwards, and with a fully-charged brush sweep across the upper margin of the space. Take up more colour and draw the brush down the sides of the shape, then continue to apply the tint with horizontal strokes from side to side, each one

overlapping the previous one to ensure a well-covered surface. In this way the colour is induced to float evenly from the top to the bottom of the space. Note the word used, "Float," which is correct, for the pigment should not be dragged in a niggardly manner with an almost dry brush, or there will be no semblance of flatness or uniformity. Any surplus colour may be lifted from the bottom of the panel with blotting paper or a brush which has been squeezed dry between the thumb and finger. A few washes laid on in this manner will teach the beginner a great deal about the behaviour of water colour. It is valuable practice as the ability to float on the colour makes for confidence and helps to overcome that timid and nervous treatment which makes so many sketches appear dry and hard. Bear in mind the motto, "Plenty of water," and don't get upset if the colours do run one into another, for this often gives a valuable softness to the work, besides, if deemed undesirably soft later on, they can easily be sharpened up, or even separated if necessary. We have now made some little progress in the manipulation of colour, and may be getting impatient to commence on a sketch. If the first attempt—or even the twenty-first—does not satisfy you don't be discouraged (rather be discouraged if

it does), for nothing worth doing is done easily, and satisfaction often means a cessation of effort and study. A satisfied man has reached his goal, he has no further to go along the road to achievement. He is, therefore, to be pitied, for it must have been an easy goal.

Simple
subjects

For the first essay we had better not choose too elaborate a subject. Something fairly simple, with comparatively broad masses and not too much fine detail will be most suitable for a beginning. First choose your subject carefully, aiming at simple shapes and masses and as good a composition as may be, bearing in mind the lessons that have preceded this. Sketch in your main lines and masses in pencil, giving due attention to the characteristic shapes of the component parts. Aim at essentials. As previously stated, it is a wise plan to make a small sketch in your notebook first, blocking in the main masses of tone in order that some idea of the ultimate effect may be gathered. On this small scale aught but essentials is of little value: as soon as minor things begin to obtrude the scale of the work is upset, and, therefore, ruined.

The pencil sketches, Figs. 25, 26, 27, show the sort of note that is quickly made, and is of

great value because you are thinking rapidly, and analysing earnestly in order to get at the essential picturesqueness of the scene which has attracted you. If your first note fails to satisfy, try another one, and still another if necessary, for this little note if it pleases you will make your future drawing more sure and confident. Further, it will be a guide and an inspiration throughout the sketch. It is better to proceed in this way, making up your mind so to speak, in the small sketch than to timidly suggest a number of tentative arrangements only to erase them again. Again it is easier to plan on a small scale than on a large one; and it helps to give dignity and size to the final sketch, for the simplicity of the small one helps to unify and to simplify the larger one by suggesting the effect. Having settled the composition and drawn in the main lines we are prepared to apply the colour. The pencil lines may either be softened with rubber or left strong and decisive, according to the nature of the work. If soft and delicate in colour the lines may prove an eyesore, but if bold and vigorous they may be useful rather than otherwise. Should there be any lines in the sky it is safer to almost obliterate them, for they are quite capable of marring the delicacy and transparency of this part. The next stage is colour, where our

Pencil
lines

Colour

procedure will depend very much upon the nature of the landscape and the effect we wish to obtain. Students constantly ask for a method which they can use for all their sketches, but as the manner of working must to a large extent depend upon the nature of the scene it is impossible to give any formulæ. Sometimes it is better to work with the paper wet, sometimes it is easier when dry. Sometimes a wash of yellow, or grey, or other tint is floated over the whole paper, and the subsequent painting added to this, maybe before it dries, possibly after. Or we may prefer to work direct and apply each tint as nearly as possible true in shape and tone, finishing as we go along, save for a few touches at the end. One may have a predilection for this or that method, and one may ultimately develop a style of work which is employed with but little variation, but I have never yet found a method which can be used for all classes of scenery. The technique is dictated by the landscape; in other words, Nature is the final arbiter so long as we are inspired by her mood, and desire to express that mood in our work. Some teachers advocate the clean direct method, so emphatically that they refuse to consider any other style, basing their argument upon the work of Cotman, De Wint and the rest. But it seems to me that



FIG. 34. 1ST STAGE. COVERING PAPER.



FIG. 35. 2ND STAGE. DEEPENING TONES.



FIG. 36. FINISHED SKETCH.



FIG. 38. DIRECT WORK ON CARTRIDGE PAPER.

the result is the primary thing, and if good, it justifies the means adopted, whatever they may be. "Your colour must be absolutely transparent," say some, while others employ Chinese white, and so the controversy goes on. The student is advised to steer clear of it, and, while recognising the essential transparency of his medium, should feel perfectly free to adopt any method which promises to give him what he wants. It is difficult enough in all conscience without hampering oneself with unnecessary restrictions. The illustrations here shown, Nos. 34, 35 and 36, depict a very suitable type of scene to commence with. The shapes are simple and the masses fairly broad. The preliminary pencil lines were not erased, as the tones are strong enough to veil them. There was no pencilling in the sky which was painted more or less direct. After the sketch was planned in pencil the aim was to get rid of the white paper as soon as possible, for out in the open the glare of the light reflected therefrom is very dazzling. This seems to be one of the great drawbacks to the so-called "direct" method for any tint placed upon white paper must by sheer contrast appear far stronger and darker than it will when the rest of the paper is covered. After long experience it is certainly possible to form a fairly accurate estimate of

the correct values even upon white paper, but for the beginner it is, to say the least of it, difficult. The sky was washed over completely with Rimington's sky grey, which tint was carried over the distance as well. The nearer portions were then covered with yellow ochre with a touch of Indian yellow, and where the pathway comes, a little brown madder. Burnt sienna served for the tree masses, and while the paper was still damp the white cloud edges were lifted out with a brush squeezed dry, and a little cobalt added above, and in the distant landscape. The sky is mainly grey, and it may be added here that grey is a much easier colour to harmonise with a landscape than blue. Further, there can be no doubt that a clouded sky is intrinsically of greater interest than one of unclouded blue. A low horizon seems to call for an interesting sky, for if the wide expanse above is unbroken it is apt to be monotonous, however interesting the terrestrial portion may be. Blue is not by any means easy to handle satisfactorily, and if at all strong calls for corresponding strength elsewhere, or it becomes overwhelming. Strong, bright colours are much more difficult to harmonise than subtle or delicate ones. Further, that sparkling, brilliant effect we are aiming at does not always result from the use of strong colour, for contrary to

Procedure

Strong
colour

expectation two bright colours placed side by side sometimes tend to neutralise each other, which tendency is even more pronounced when a number of colours come into juxtaposition. The use of pure bright pigment does not necessarily produce a brilliant scheme ; on the contrary a flat, dull one often ensues instead. It may be taken as an axiom that the brighter, or rather the more saturated the colour is, the smaller should be the area it occupies. A note of pure colour shining from a grey scheme will tell far more distinctly than a series of brilliant hues placed together. Brangwyn is one of our most brilliant colourists, but a careful study of his joyous work will show how predominant are quiet greys, browns, or other neutral tints. Patches of emerald green, vermilion or ultramarine, shine like jewels out of the pervading quietude, and somehow we feel that the colour is gorgeous, rich and sunny. Paradoxical as it may appear, a scheme in which grey occupies the largest area can suggest far more colour than another in which the pigments are used to their utmost capacity. The first scheme will probably be rich, even though quiet and low in tone, while it is quite possible that the other will be crude, strident and vulgar. But, a word of warning, let your greys be pure, transparent

and colourful, for it is wonderfully easy to get mud instead of colour.

To return to our sketch. The colour recommended for the sky, Rimington's sky grey, is one of considerable charm, for as it dries its component hues seem to segregate themselves, and to give a varied grey with an opalescent quality of much beauty. Cobalt, light red, and yellow ochre give a somewhat similar tint, but with far more trouble and less certainty. The paper covered, and the scheme lightly suggested, we proceed to strengthen the colour while the paper is still damp. More burnt sienna is added to the trees, and Prussian blue is blotted on as well, in order to produce the necessary green. Two brushes may usefully be employed here, one for each tint, so that instead of mixing them on the palette they can be blotted into each other on the paper. This makes for variety and interest, besides helping to suggest the texture resulting from the massed foliage. The trees might be brought up to full strength at this stage, as, being the darkest patch in the scheme, they will then serve as a key. More cobalt is added to the line of hills in the distance, and yellow ochre with a touch of vermilion to the band just between the trunks of the trees. Indian yellow, yellow

Applying
colour

ochre, and a little of Hooker's green comes into the foreground, with a touch of brown madder and cobalt for the roadway and the middle distance on the left. The final stage requires thought, for the various parts need to be brought into the right relationship with each other. The pathway leads to the trees where we have placed our darkest note. To emphasize this we might keep our lightest note in the same area. The blue in the sky seemed a little crude, so a faint wash of alizarin was applied which was carried over the grey in one or two places also, and over the distance as well. Little touches of pure vermilion were dotted over the band just below the hills, and brown madder on the bank to the left. The foreground is painted with patches of pure colour touched into each other, which helps to produce a broken varied effect without being hard. Burnt sienna, Indian yellow, Hooker's green, Prussian blue, brown madder and ultramarine were employed, with final touches of sepia and indigo. Further consideration suggested scratching out a streak of light on the water to the left of the largest tree, to a few spots of indigo and sepia being added to the trees themselves, and to the introduction of the figures. Texture and atmosphere was given to the foliage and to parts of the foreground and the distant hills by

Texture

dragging an almost dry brush firmly across. The edges of the foliage were "lost and found" by washing off a little colour here and there to blend it with the sky, while a few strong touches were added in other parts. Such was the procedure adopted in this sketch. In plate 37 the method was more direct. The outline of the trees and foreground was first drawn in pencil, after the arrangement had been decided upon. The sky was then washed over completely with the sky grey, the lights lifted out with a dry brush, and the touches of blue added with cobalt. The trees next demanded attention, forming, as it were, a dark silhouette against the sky. Owing to the light interstices and the necessity for direct drawing it seemed advisable to paint them up to the full strength without any preliminary wash. With burnt sienna, Indian yellow, and Prussian blue I mixed a middle tint with which the foliage was painted. Two other brushes were kept handy, one for pure sienna the other for Prussian blue. Blobs of each of these colours were applied, giving variety to the general tint and helping to suggest textures. A little sepia and brown madder added before these were dry completed the trees. The hedges were next treated with the same colours, with the addition of a little raw sienna. Indian yellow and viridian were added

for the bank below the hedge. The path is cobalt, brown madder, and grey. The bank on the left viridian, aureolin, burnt sienna, and terre-verte. The distant trees were put in with grey with a little of the green used for the large trees, blotted in whilst the grey was wet, with a touch of cobalt added. Vermilion and yellow ochre gave the light touch in the background. Where the path dips seemed the place for a figure, which was suggested with ultramarine and brown madder. Here again a little lightness and atmosphere have been added to the foliage by wiping an almost dry brush across. This, if carefully done, is exceedingly useful for suggesting atmosphere, as it lifts the pigment from the outstanding grain of the paper, leaving that in the hollows undisturbed. The brush should be damp but not wet. If dipped into water and squeezed between the finger and thumb it is just about right. It must be pressed fairly firmly upon the paper and wiped across the desired part. If a sketch refuses to come right, despite all you can do to it, it is quite a good plan to hold it under the tap and let water pour over it for awhile. Take a sponge or large brush and with it wipe off the superfluous colour. As much may be removed as you wish up to a degree, for it is next to impossible to get white paper again once you have applied a

Sponging
out

stain of water colour. Some pigments stain far more than others, especially the transparent ones, for the opaque colours are composed of more or less minute particles which are fixed to the surface of the paper by the medium employed, while the transparent colours stain the paper. Prussian blue, crimson lake, and the pigments obtained from the madder root are all stains, while the earth colours and the metal oxides are of the opaque order. Each type of pigment possesses its own peculiar charm, the transparent tints dry with a sort of bloom, while the opaque ones give a somewhat granular surface. When mixing two or more colours for a large wash we have to guard against the possibility of one sinking to the bottom, and leaving the others suspended in the water, as an alteration in tint will accrue. To obviate this it is well to stir the mixture each time the brush is dipped into it. Vermilion is a heavy colour, and very apt to settle. Plate 38 is introduced because it is absolutely direct work on cartridge paper. It is often worth while to experiment with paper other than the ones specially made for water colour, but these experiments had better be left until some proficiency has been acquired in the manipulation of colour. But a change of paper is sometimes a source of inspiration. The

Paper

quality and surface varies so considerably in different papers that an entire change of technique is necessitated. David Cox paper, for example, is absorbent, and when damp is deeper in tone than when dry. It calls for direct work and also for tones stronger than seem necessary when applied, as they dry lighter. Further, its surface is poor and does not permit of sponging or washing out. It is a paper to avoid until you have learned to handle colour with freedom and confidence. When this desirable stage is reached, however, it is calculated to give you effects of great charm because its faint warm tint aids considerably in binding the colours together.

David
Cox

Our sketch depicts a scene quite common in England, a country road bordered with grass and fringed with stunted trees, the atmosphere light and fresh after a passing shower. The paper being smooth, with no "bite" in it, the colour floats easily, too easily if we are not cautious. It also has a tendency to exhibit the brush strokes, which, if used thoughtfully, is an advantage rather than a drawback. The sky was flooded on with cobalt and sky grey. The cloud forms were floated on, leaving the whites almost untouched; the blue was applied to the damp paper with a sort of dabbing

Method

motion. The trees are ochre, burnt sienna and Prussian blue used straight from the pans, and not too wet. The same treatment was used for the distance, which is cobalt. The roadway was given a wash of light red and cobalt, with final touches of burnt sienna, cobalt and brown madder. The grass is aureolin, viridian and burnt sienna, with a little Prussian blue and touches of sepia at the margins. This is an example of a quick sketch which aims at reproducing an effect of a transient nature. The idea was to suggest the moisture and brilliance that follows a shower on a rainy day in summer. Needless to say upon paper of this type the effect must be arrived at quickly and without labour. If the desired result is not "hit" at the first shot, it is not likely to be achieved at all. Such experiments are of value, but had better be postponed until the behaviour of the pigment is familiar to you, and you have learnt something of tone and colour value. It is safer to use a stout paper of good quality because of the opportunities it affords for working out the particular effect you desire. Upon this stout paper we have found that a sketch which refuses to please us can be sponged out and repainted. If the sponge does not remove as much of the pigment as we would wish an old tooth-brush or nail-brush may be



FIG. 37. A COTSWOLD BYWAY. FINISHED SKETCH.

used. Not too vigorously or the surface will be spoilt. As before stated the tints can never be wholly removed, but this is useful in the majority of cases, for by using fairly pure colour upon the faint ghostly picture remaining results can be obtained which are unobtainable by any other means. The strength of this faint picture, upon which you intend to work, is dependent upon the quantity of colour taken off, and this will depend, of course, upon what you are aiming at. For removing small passages of colour the following method is recommended. With a brush charged with clean water cover the shape to be removed. Allow the moisture to stand for a minute or so, then soak it up with blotting paper and wipe with a clean soft rag. With good quality paper this gives a clean shape almost white, which can be tinted again as required. For sharp white passages a penknife may be employed, by scraping off the stained surface, but this should be left till the work is quite finished, as the scratched paper is likely to catch the colour with unpleasant results. Our instructions have dealt wholly with translucent water colour. The use of Chinese white is not recommended except where it cannot be avoided, as there is a possibility—very remote so the makers tell us—of this pigment becoming dark and dirty. Despite this,

Washing
out

Scraping
out

Chinese
white

however, it has its uses and for work intended for reproduction it is very often employed. Brabazon used it very successfully mixed in small quantities with transparent colour, the opalescent tints so obtained are certainly very beautiful. It can also be used with good effect where small patches of light colour are needed on a ground of darker tone. A mass of flower forms or light foliage may be painted with Chinese white and allowed to dry, after which a wash of colour is applied. This is a quicker method than washing out as previously described. Purists wax very wroth at the mention of Chinese white, but surely the end justifies the means, and if we can add one jot or tittle to the beauty in the world what matter how we do it.

Body
colour

A good deal of work is done nowadays in body colour, which is used in exactly the same manner as water colour, but does not rely upon the paper for its light but upon the pigment. The paper is completely veiled by the opaque colour, and white pigment plays a large part. It is very useful for decorative work, and many makers have placed upon the market specially prepared pigments. Pictures executed in this medium have a quality entirely their own, but they lack the delicate charm of a translucent

water colour which relies upon the white paper for its luminosity. Some artists use preparations and mediums with their water colours, in addition to water. Some, who find them dry too quickly, add a little glycerine to the water. Others, desiring something of a sheen, add gum arabic. Others again use specially prepared mediums, but these things depend entirely upon the artist, and at first, anyway, had better be tabooed by the beginner. Stick to the pure colours and clear water until you have found out what they are capable of, then, if you wish, experiment with other things. Turner tried many experiments, and a lot of his work has been ruined thereby.

Mediums

When speaking of colour in an earlier part of this book, the risk of using crude brilliant hues was mentioned. It might be of service in this connection to give some of the colour notes appended by David Cox to the sketches which illustrate his book on "Water-Colour Painting," to show how he obtained his rich effects, with pigments which are not always the most brilliant. One list for "Battle Abbey" is:—The sky, indigo alone ; clouds, indigo and light red ; the distance, indigo, light red and a little lake ; the building, indigo, light red and a little gamboge ; the shadowed parts, indigo and

lake finished with Vandyke brown and indigo ; the greens in the foreground, indigo, burnt sienna and gamboge, finished with Vandyke brown. Another, "A View in Surrey," gives sky, indigo, lake and ivory black ; the distance, indigo, black and a little lake ; cottage, yellow ochre with a little burnt sienna ; roof, black and lake with burnt sienna ; shadows, indigo and Indian red ; road, indigo and Indian red finished with Vandyke brown and lake ; the greens for bank and bushes, indigo, burnt sienna and gamboge, completed with indigo and brown pink and a few touches of Vandyke brown. Again for "Effect, Mid-day" he gives : sky, indigo and lake ; distant foliage, indigo and Indian red ; cornfield, yellow ochre finished with yellow ochre and Vandyke brown ; bushes in front, indigo, Indian red and brown pink ; the road, light red ; the foreground, finished with Vandyke brown. Such were the colour schemes wherewith Cox produced those rich, deep toned pictures of English landscape, which are still amongst the finest things in water colour art. Indigo seems to have been the only blue used. His reds and yellows are few and comparatively sombre compared with those we can buy from the colourman to-day, while Vandyke brown and black with burnt sienna stood for his browns and dark tints. It simply

proves that it does not depend so much upon the colours employed as upon the way in which they are used. A few attempts worked in some such restricted scale as he used would be valuable in teaching us how much can be done with a few simple colours. Gamboge is a colour not to be recommended, however, as it is rather fugitive. We have a more brilliant range of colours at our disposal to-day, and it is up to us to use them with the same exquisite skill as the older water-colour men did their more sombre and less numerous pigments.

PASTEL

Pastel is a medium of considerable charm, capable of producing effects quite unlike either oil or water colour, though in the hands of some it is often made to resemble both of these mediums in turn. In both cases, however, it loses some of its essential charm. In a pastel sketch there are two important factors, the paper and the chalk. The paper should play almost, if not quite, as important a part in the production of the effect as the pastel. Special papers are made in a variety of tints, and the particular shade chosen should suit the subject in hand. For a grey scheme a grey paper seems to be called for, for a warm scheme a buff or brown, and so on, with due regard for the part

Paper.

Pastels

you wish it to play in your scheme. The pastels themselves had better be of good quality and not the greasy type, as they are next to impossible to work over. Pastels are made in three degrees, hard, medium and soft, and in the majority of cases the soft are preferable, though they do not adhere to the paper quite so well as the others. There are difficulties connected with sketching from Nature in pastels: one is the fragility of the chalks, and the other the tendency of the particles to smudge or fall off the sketch in transport. With regard to the number of tints, and the particular ones required, it is hardly safe to suggest. There are between six and seven hundred made, but generally about two dozen are required for a sketch. Needless to say, however, a different set of colours will be required for a brilliant sunlight effect to the set used for a quiet grey scheme. It is safer to select a few chalks of different hues, find out what they are capable of, and add to them as need arises. Charts of the colours obtainable are supplied by the manufacturers. For sketching excursions a specially made box is recommended similar to the oil colour sketching box supplied by artists' colourmen. The paper can be pinned to the cover of the box, where the canvas boards or wood panels are fixed for oil sketching, and so

Sketching
box

carried in comparative safety. The pastels occupy the place of the oil colours. Lefranc's "Cedrate" box is a good substitute for the specially made box. There are three methods of working in pastel. The first is to place the strokes side by side, allowing the paper to show between them. At a little distance the chalk and the paper blend, producing a tint composed of the two. The second is to apply the chalk and to rub it over the surface to produce a general tone, adding strokes and touches to this tinted ground. The third is to mix the pastels on the paper by rubbing one layer over another until the under layer shows through the upper. Either of these methods is capable of producing good results, but considering the essential qualities of the medium the first is preferable. A pastel should frankly confess the dry, chalky quality of the materials as a water colour does its transparency, or an oil colour does its brush work, and its mingled transparency and opacity. There is no advantage, and less merit, in trying to imitate another medium. Accept the limitations of your materials, and your work will possess a charm which only those materials can give. The chief advantage of using pastels lies in the readiness with which effects may be rendered and in its spontaneity and freedom; it seems, therefore,

Methods

that the best way to apply them is the one most suited to the subject in hand, and to the temperament of the pastellist. Remember, that a free and easy technique is calculated to give added pleasure to yourself and to the beholder. Use as much pastel as is necessary, but no more, for it has a tendency to fall off if too thickly applied, and don't forget to let the paper play its part. The illustration (Frontispiece) was first roughed in with charcoal on grey paper and the sky shapes rubbed in with blue grey and creamy white. The foliage was next treated with varied greens, browns, black, etc., and the lights added fairly thickly. The branches, trunk and foreground were suggested, and the sheep and man added. The distance was touched in with varied colours, and the lights finally applied.

TREES

Trees play so important a part in landscape that they should be studied continuously and under all conditions, for there are few things which cause the beginner so much anxious thought, and probably depression as his efforts to represent trees. There are many species, each with its own family characteristics, while each member has an individuality of its own which modifies, though it still conforms to the

specific type. It is for the student to study the individual in order that he may discover the typical. Rarely do we find a tree which embodies within itself all the characteristics of its species. Infinite in their variety, trees are amongst the most beautiful and wonderful of Nature's handiwork, and the painter may well thank her for so tractable and so plentiful an element for his use. It is depressing to imagine a world without trees, for there is no scene so uninteresting as a wide, barren stretch of country where none grows. Fortunately—despite the wholesale vandalism of commerce which, careless of beauty or of aught save money, ruthlessly hacks down whole forests of lovely trees—there are still plenty remaining for the delight of the painter and of all who care for beauty. And whoever studies them with any degree of earnestness cannot fail to become a lover of trees. Emerson says: "In the woods is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods we return to reason and faith," and again "At the gate of the forest the man of the world is forced to leave his city estimates of great and small, wise and foolish." Such is the deep impression made upon a thoughtful mind

by the contemplation of trees. To many of us there are few more poignant sounds than the thud of the woodman's axe, or the rasp of the saw, and the final crash of the fallen monarch of the woodland. But let us turn from this painful aspect to the study of these lovely structures as they stand serene and strong through summer sunshine and winter storms. Let us note the marvellous variety in the various species, and in the individuals of each species according to age and conditions of growth. Take an oak growing in an exposed position, sturdy, vigorous and gnarled, its limbs spreading and strongly curved, springing from a stout trunk firmly rooted in the soil. Note the masses of foliage, and the lights and shadows that exhibit their modelling, for though foliage is composed of a multitude of leaves they are grouped in dense masses of various forms and sizes. Compare this tree with its brother in the woods, where it grows more slender and delicate because of its struggle upwards towards the light. Of the two the first is the more typical. The elm is one of the most beautiful trees in the English landscape, and also one of the most majestic. Its foliage takes really exquisite shapes, rising in masses of infinite variety to the fan-like crown. Few trees are so fine in silhouette form, or so useful to the painter as the full-grown elm.

The slender, delicate grace of the birch, with its silver stem splashed with deeper colour and its light dainty foliage, is a joy to the artist. The Scots pine red in stem and blue green in tufted crown, the larch conical in shape and sombre in hue, the cedar, the fir, and the yew tree all quietly coloured and worthy of careful note. The horse chestnut with palmate leaves and wonderful spires of blossom, the sweet, odorous lime around which the bees boom through the long summer day, and the beech with grey stems stained with lichen, all awaiting our attention. Apple, pear and other fruit trees, pink and white in spring and decked with russet treasures in the autumn. Hawthorn garbed in white blossom, all providing exquisite drawing in stem, branch and leafage. The Lombardy poplar rising like a spire, the rounded crown of the pollard willow, the misty grey foliage of the almond-leaved willow with its tracery of dark stems, the sycamore, the maple, the ash, and many others. Enough material here for a lifetime, each with its own peculiar anatomy and its own typical foliage modified and infinitely varied by the conditions of its growth. No student of landscape who watches trees and allows them free access, as it were, to his mind, who has seen them in the grey dawn, in full sunlight, and in the golden mists of evening, and has noted how

like the various instruments that comprise an orchestra, they each contribute to the general harmony their individual quota; no one realising this can fail to be a lover of trees. Nature uses them for the expression of her ever changing moods, and like æolian harps they respond to her lightest touch. The painter must learn to handle them with the same sure, though delicate touch if he would express in paint these moods of Nature.

Aims in
sketching

When sketching from Nature, whatever our medium may be, it is advisable to start with a clear idea of what we are aiming at. Shall we try to produce a picture, pleasing in line, tone, shape and colour, or shall we attempt the impossible and try to produce an accurate copy of what lies before us? Shall we study the work of the great men who have lived and laboured, leaving for our benefit and enjoyment the fruits of their labours, or shall we, with youthful egotism, ignore their work? Shall we endeavour to go with them as far as they have gone, and then farther, if we may, or shall we start with no knowledge of the craft and do our best, or worst? It seems to me that the safest and quickest course is to study what has been done before in conjunction with a first-hand study of Nature. Learn the language, then seek Nature

for inspiration, and aim at expressing the thoughts or ideas inspired as beautifully as we are able. To take a simile from another art shall we aim at journalism or literature? Study we must, if we would do anything worth while, and the deeper our insight the better worth the while it will be. Emerson says: "Genius detects through countless individuals the fixed species, through many species the genus; through all genera the steadfast type; through all the kingdoms of organised life the eternal unity. Substitute the word artist for genius—though they may, of course, be one and the same—and it is a good statement of how he should regard Nature. We should strive to see below the surface, not content with the superficial, but seek for fundamentals." The earth, it has been well said, "is the garment of God."

Some see merely the stuff from which the garment is made, others realise the great function it fulfils. Amongst the seers should be placed the artist. The average person watching a painter at work wonders perhaps why he has altered the form of a tree, even though forced to admit that it looks better, truer actually, in its place in the picture than would a more accurate copy of the one before him. It is an oak maybe, and the representa-

tion seems more typical, more essentially an oak than the actual tree. Anyhow, to the spectator it is unmistakably an oak, because the artist has stated all, or nearly all, that he knows of oak trees. He has studied many specimens, has drawn and painted them, and by so doing has absorbed the essential characteristics of the family. So the tree he has painted is the essence of the oak, a worthy representative of the great family of oaks. It aims, however inadequately, at portraying the "steadfast type." The aim of art is not copying, so much as translating. G. F. Watts said: "Art is not a presentation of Nature, it is a representation of a sensation." Nature evokes in us emotions or sensations more or less attuned to her own moods of sunshine or shadow, according to the degree of our sensitiveness. If we can paint so as to stir similar emotions in others, then have we achieved art. Art is Nature passed through the alembic of a mind, rendered more intelligible, so to speak, by being tinged with a personality. Says Goethe, "Art is art only because it is not Nature." So much depends upon the attitude adopted. Nature is either bleak and inhospitable, distant and unapproachable, or infinitely friendly and enjoyable according to how we regard her. It is the mission of the painter to interpret, to exhibit to his fellows her

beauty and her friendliness to mankind. It is his to explain the subtle harmonies she is for ever weaving, so that the less sensitive mind may see and understand some part at least of the music that wraps her about. For music there is, " Visual music " of the most entrancing, for those with minds attuned.

Beneath all the varieties lies the steadfast type, behind all the activities of Nature stand immutable laws, and with insight keener than his fellows the artist sees and knows. How much he can reproduce in his work depends partly upon his ability to handle his medium, and partly upon the depth of his conviction. How much the spectator grasps is dependent upon the attitude of mind in which he approaches the work, and upon his ability to see. " For the eye only sees that which it brings the power to see." When sketching from Nature then, learn all you can of her work, study the laws that underlie her infinite varieties of form and colour, and her ever changing, transient effects, but strive also to say what you desire to say. Let your work, as far as may be, express your own moods, thoughts and aspirations, and it will be strange if it fails to make an appeal. " A work of art is an abstract, or epitome of the world." Think not that art is an effeminate

pandering to a luxurious laziness, for if honestly approached there are few more exacting tasks than painting. Further, you may be helping others in a way you know not of, for as Browning says :

“ For, don’t you mark, we’re made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see
. This world’s no blot for us,
Nor blank—it means intensely, and means good :
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.”

CHAPTER III

EXERCISES IN COMPOSITION

THE illustrations 39 to 43 show a landscape fitted to five different shapes, and indicate the alterations that must necessarily be made in the arrangement of the component parts, according to the nature of the space occupied. It will be seen that certain liberties have been taken with the elements employed in order to make them fit as harmoniously as possible into each particular shape. In all cases, however, the main items are similar, the interest is concentrated around the dark masses of trees which stand at the bend of the road, and also beyond the bend. The eye is led into the picture by way of the lines bordering the road, past the first group of trees, and into the spaces beyond, but it will always return to rest upon the dark, dominant copse by the roadside. So much is common to all the arrangements, for it is more in the spacing and the proportions that the differences exist which are consequent upon the limitations of each particular shape. It will

Trend of
line



FIG. 39. HIGH HORIZON.



FIG. 40. HIGH HORIZON.

further be noticed that in some cases a high horizon, and in others a low one has to be adopted. The benefits to be derived from making small composition notes prior to commencing a sketch in colour has been mentioned previously. The value of a "view finder" or piece of card or paper with an aperture similar in shape to our canvas or sketch block has also been dealt with. The illustrations here shown will perhaps help to make the value of these a little clearer. The "view finder" held between the eye and the chosen landscape enables us to see the portion we need separated from its surroundings. The composition notes help us to select a suitable arrangement after we have experimented with the subject and tried it in various ways, as indicated in Nos. 39 to 43.

Time spent in preliminaries of this type will often save much time and labour later on, besides leaving less room for disappointment and discouragement. "Work well begun is work half done," says an old but wise adage. Fig. 39 is a rectangular space with its greater length lying horizontally. The main group of dark trees has been placed to the left of the picture, with a lesser group more to the right and a narrow band of dark running up the hill-side. The group on the left is the dominant group,

Dominant
mass

and forms the focal centre of the arrangement. The lines of the roadway entice the eye into the picture, and seem to wind round the base of the trees, for we lose sight of the track just here, and its continuation is dependent upon the fancy of the spectator. But as the eye is caught by the minor group in the middle distance it would seem as though the road wound first to the left, then to the right, and so onwards to the hills beyond. The earth, with its grass, trees and hill-sides, dominates in this sketch, the sky being smaller in area, is consequently of minor import. There are no clouds to make it worth while concentrating upon the sky, which, together with the other portions of the scheme are subordinated to the clump of trees forming our main interest. The scheme is generally a light one, which adds to the value of the dark mass, leaving it strong and clear, because there is nothing to compete with it. It demands attention by virtue of its contrast in tone.

Value of
dark shot

Fig. 40 differs in its proportions, the roadway is lengthened, while the meadow on the right is diminished. There is even less sky than in Fig. 39, though the panel is proportionately much taller. The main lines and masses of the composition are similar, though modified to suit the altered conditions. Fig. 41 is a long,



FIG. 41. LOW HORIZON.



FIG. 42. LOW HORIZON.
WITH SCOPE FOR MODELLING
IN CLOUD FORMS.



FIG. 43. HIGH HORIZON.

low panel with a low horizon. Here the wider sky space calls for a more interesting treatment, and a cloud bank has been introduced. A clear, empty sky of such proportions might easily appear blank and monotonous above so narrow a band of earth. The clouds might be modelled into fascinating forms without disturbing the unity and homogeneity of the scheme. But they should not be allowed to compete with the dark clump of trees which has been decided upon for the keynote of the scheme. Save for a greater lengthening of the lines from side to side in order to make them fit more pleasantly into the shape, the scheme is similar to the two previous ones.

Low
horizon

Fig. 42 shows another low horizon, and also a bank of clouds. In a composition of this type the sky needs to be interesting owing to its comparatively large area, and well modelled clouds should certainly be an asset. Again the scheme is only altered sufficiently to meet the changed conditions of the bounding shape.

High
horizon

Fig. 43 is a tall upright panel with a high horizon. It suggests that the spectator is viewing the scene from comparatively high ground. The earth has here the greater import and the amount of sky included could easily be

left clear and cloudless without any feeling of blankness or vacuity. In all these sketches the interest centres upon the same group of trees, and the lines and masses are as similar as the differing shapes will permit. The intention is to illustrate the pictorial possibilities of an ordinary roadway flanked by the grassy meadows and clumps of trees, together with the value of experimenting with these simple elements in varied shapes in order to appreciate their worth as material for picture making. If we desire to produce really good work we shall spare no pains in order to obtain mastery over our craft. Such experiments as these can be carried out in the studio, using what material we may possess, and there can be little doubt about their value in helping us to acquire skill and confidence in that subtle and difficult business of composition. The necessity for composition has been insisted upon throughout this book, for the amateur is very apt to ignore, or at the least to underrate its value in landscape work. Any means whereby the student can add to his skill and knowledge should therefore be diligently practised.

Necessity
for
composition

Another excellent plan is to study analytically the work of good landscape painters. Regard each picture you may chance to see as

Analysis

an essay in composition. Analyse the scheme and find out—if possible—why it appeals to you. On the other hand, if it does not appeal, then try to discover the reason for that, for you may learn from pictures you do not like, as well as from those you do, though the path to knowledge may perhaps be a less pleasant one. But careful study may reveal qualities you did not suspect at first, and you may grow to like the work, or at any rate to suffer it gladly. On the other hand, if your dislike persists, and you can find out the cause of it, you will thus learn what to avoid. The personal element plays an important part in our appreciation of pictures, and work which appeals to one person will leave another unmoved. Study carefully the relative quantities of light and dark, and the balance of tone against tone. Find out which occupies the larger area, the light or the dark. Note the shapes of each as they occur, and the size and quality of the shape in comparison with those surrounding it. For this purpose a reproduction — especially in monochrome — is quite as useful as an original, even more so perhaps, as the entire absence of colour leaves the appeal dependent upon line, tone and shape. Your study should not be confined to merely looking at the picture, or to mental analysis only. It is better to make sketches indicating

the main balance of light and dark. An excellent plan is to translate the picture into as few tones as possible. Take two tones to start with, just black and white, and see what you can do with these. A picture that can be rendered at all satisfactorily in two tones needs to be very simple and also well balanced in light and dark. Usually an intermediate tone is necessary to give an adequate idea of the original, and a still further tone is often an advantage. In order to economise time and labour a piece of tracing or semi-transparent paper may be laid over the reproduction, and the tones blocked in straight away with a brush and ink. In this way a number of experiments may be made quite easily, but an occasional freehand sketch should be made as well in order to get the full benefit from these exercises. It is quite a good plan to regard the picture in question with eyes half closed, as in this way much of the detail is lost and the work is revealed in its big, simple masses. We are very apt to lose sight of the big things, because we are obsessed by the details. The aim should be to simplify as far as may be, and to acquire knowledge of tone composition by analysing good pictures.

Tone
analysis

Corot

Fig. 44 indicates the sort of thing that might be made from a typical Corot. Corot is an excellent exemplar in the use of tones, for his colour is so delicate and intangible, that it seems to be more a suggestion, a hint that sets you dreaming of colour than a definite colour statement. Naturally, all the subtlety for which Corot's work is so remarkable is lacking, but despite this there is a quality in the shapes and a balance of black and white which helps to prove how much the original depends upon its tone planning for its appeal. Note carefully the relative quantities of black and white, and the spots of white dotted over the black, to keep it from seeming flat and dead. Corot knew the value of composition. It will be found upon analysis that all those tender, lyrical landscapes of his are very carefully composed to express the mood of the artist. There is nothing left in them to jar upon the spectator or to compete in any way with the prevailing mood.

Bonington

Fig. 45 is from R. P. Bonington, that youthful genius who promised so much in the little he did, but unfortunately died before the promise came to fulfilment. Here the silhouette is interesting while the lines of the steps and the railings leading to the mill are of great value.



FIG. 44. TONE SCHEME FROM COROT.



FIG. 45. TONE SCHEME FROM R. P. BONINGTON.

The opposing line of the sail running downwards from left to right, towards the two figures, is another valuable line. The white in this scheme outweighs the black, which, therefore, becomes more valuable because it is more economically used.

Richard
Wilson

Fig. 46 is an attempt to render a Richard Wilson in a few simple tones, not by any means an easy task. Note the value of the white in this scheme, particularly where it is contrasted by the black. The shape made by the light is also noteworthy, as it takes a somewhat circular form within the darker margin. The black occupies a considerable area, while the whites possess a sparkling quality which is mainly dependent upon contrast.

Constable

Fig. 47 is after Constable, and is another example of the value of white in a dark scheme. Note how the eye is caught by the white spots and carried into and around the picture. The white cloud and the fields at the end of the lane seem to hold the attention and may, therefore, be regarded as the centre of interest.

Harpignies

Fig. 48 is an attempt to suggest in black and white the fine tree forms modelled against, and into, an evening sky by Harpignies. It is, of course, merely a suggestion, but it helps to



FIG. 46. TONE SCHEME AFTER RICHARD WILSON.

indicate the value of shapes, and of balance of tone in work of this nature. These sketches are intended simply to give an idea of the lines upon which to pursue your enquiries into tone composition, and are not to be regarded as attempts to reproduce the tones of the originals.

Copying

Copying, except as a means whereby to acquire a knowledge of our craft, is not to be recommended. A copy must needs fall short of the original, and at the best it is merely a restatement in similar terms of the same idea. To acquire a language it may be beneficial to repeat another's statement because by so doing we acquire ease and facility in the use of the language. But having learned to speak, there is little use or credit in repeating parrot-wise the speech of some other man, however wise or eloquent he may be. "Who follows another must always lag behind." But if we take his statements, and analyse them, and learn how he constructed his sentences, how, and in what manner, he has expressed his ideas, we shall discover more than mere repetition will teach us. The exercises here suggested are not repetitions, they are translations, analyses, problems in tone selection. It requires considerable mental effort and application to render, or even to suggest in two, three or four tones the pictorial arrangement and quality of a



FIG. 47. AFTER CONSTABLE.

polychromatic painting. It is not exactly easy to discover amidst the varied and multifarious colours, tones and lines of such a work the basic masses upon which it is built. We may rest assured, however, that every landscape which satisfactorily endures the test of translation into monochrome has been carefully planned in line, tone and shape apart from colour. To discover its arrangement, and to set it down in plain, simple terms is the object of these exercises.

TEXTURES

The suggestion or rendering of texture plays a very large part in landscape work, as well as in every other branch of painting. It is an important factor in technique which, to the initiated, constitutes an appreciable part of a picture's appeal. A brief statement of the items that might be included under this head will serve to show how inevitably it enters into all forms of graphic art, and how essential it is to study its possibilities, if we would get the best out of our medium. Pencil gives a velvety line ranging from tender grey to an almost pure black, and it can be made to produce a solid tone of practically any quality. It can be spotted, stippled, hatched and cross hatched, or used purely in line. Charcoal is looser and

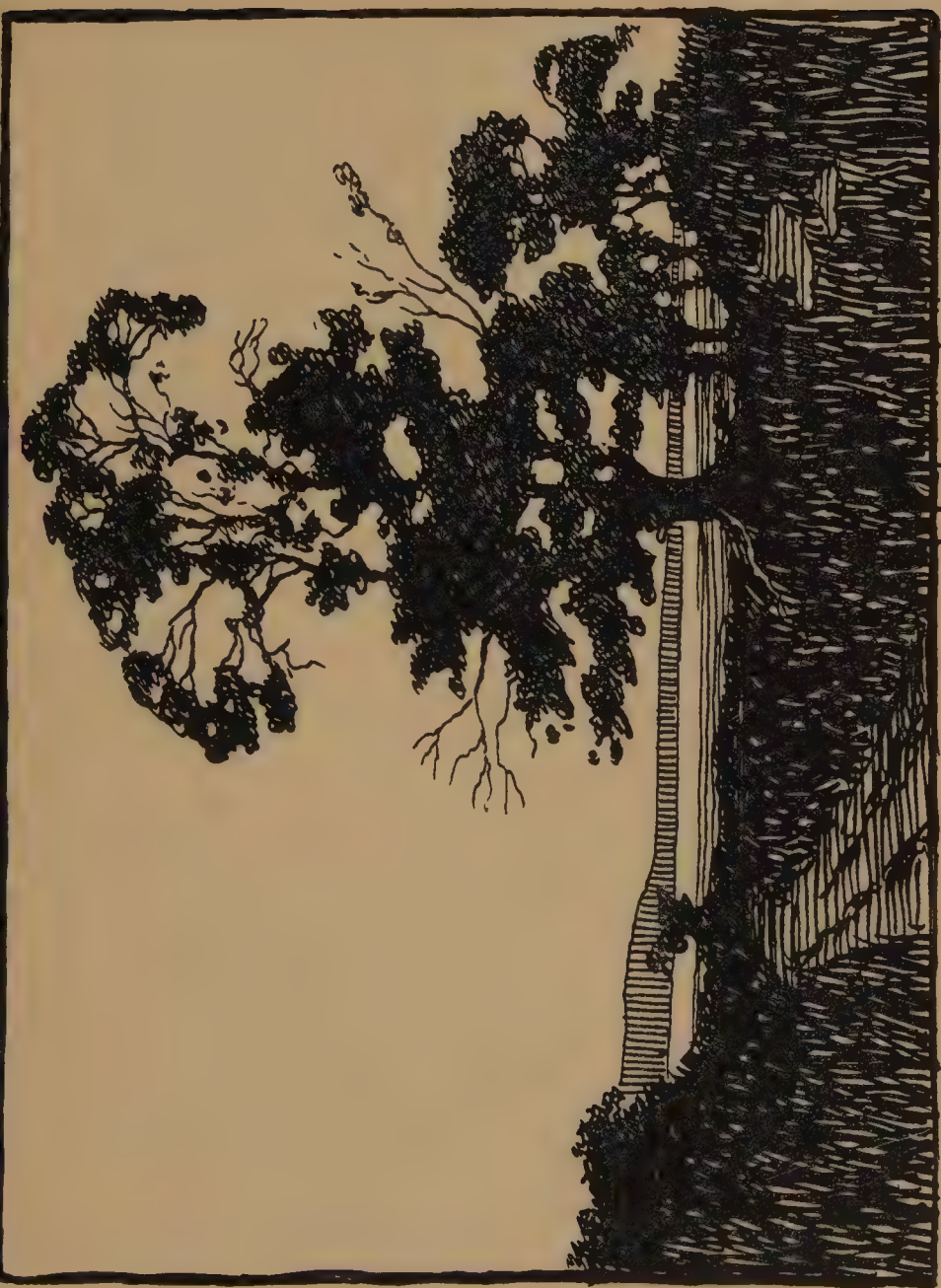


FIG. 48. ANALYSIS OF HARPIGNIES.

blackier than pencil, with a range almost—if not quite—as wide. Water colour can be floated on the paper, or used in blobs, strokes, patches or “stipple.” Pastel can be rubbed on the paper until an even tone results, either as a tint completely veiling the paper, or more transparently as a modification of the colour of the paper. It can be applied in a series of opaque strokes with the paper showing between, so that, seen from a little distance the colours of the paper and pastel blend into one. Ink can be used in dots, strokes, lines or solid shapes. The paper in use may be “Rough,” “Not,” or “Hot-pressed.” It may be pure white or tinted. So much for “texture” as dependent upon the medium employed.

Textures
in
Nature

We next come to a more subtle and difficult branch of the subject—the textures of the objects or elements of which our picture is composed. Skies of infinite variety. Clouds of different types, cumulus, cirrus, cirro stratus, etc., etc., and all the diversity of atmospheric effect ranging from a delicate haze to a semi-opaque fog. Water—still, rippling, running or lashed into foaming breakers by an angry wind. The texture of the foam tracery that floats upon the wind-tossed wave is at once the delight and the despair of the marine painter. Trees with



FIG. 49. ON THE DON.



FIG. 50. GREENHOUSE.

stems, foliage and twigs infinitely varied according to species and conditions of growth. Roads, pathways and tracks, smooth or rough, dry or wet, chalk, sand, clay or meadows, each presenting a different problem in textures. Ploughed fields, sand dunes, grass, corn, stubble, heather, clover, bracken, brambles, lichen, and all the wonderful textures and patterns with which Nature carpets the earth. Animals clad in fur or wool, long or close-cropped, lank or crisply curled, provide further problems. Enough has been enumerated to indicate the wide range of this subject of textures. Its importance can hardly be overstated, for colour and form without studied texture is very dull and flaccid. Much depends upon the manner in which the colour is applied, and much upon its tone and tint. Grass and foliage cannot be painted blade by blade or leaf by leaf, life would hardly be long enough even if the result was worth while, which is doubtful. Supposing, however, that we did paint leaves and blades of grass, should we be rendering our own impression of Nature? Standing in a field of grass, one may be able to trace an individual blade here and there in one's immediate vicinity, but at twenty or thirty yards they all merge into, what? A mass, a blending of blades into a general hue and texture peculiar to grass. Variety is given

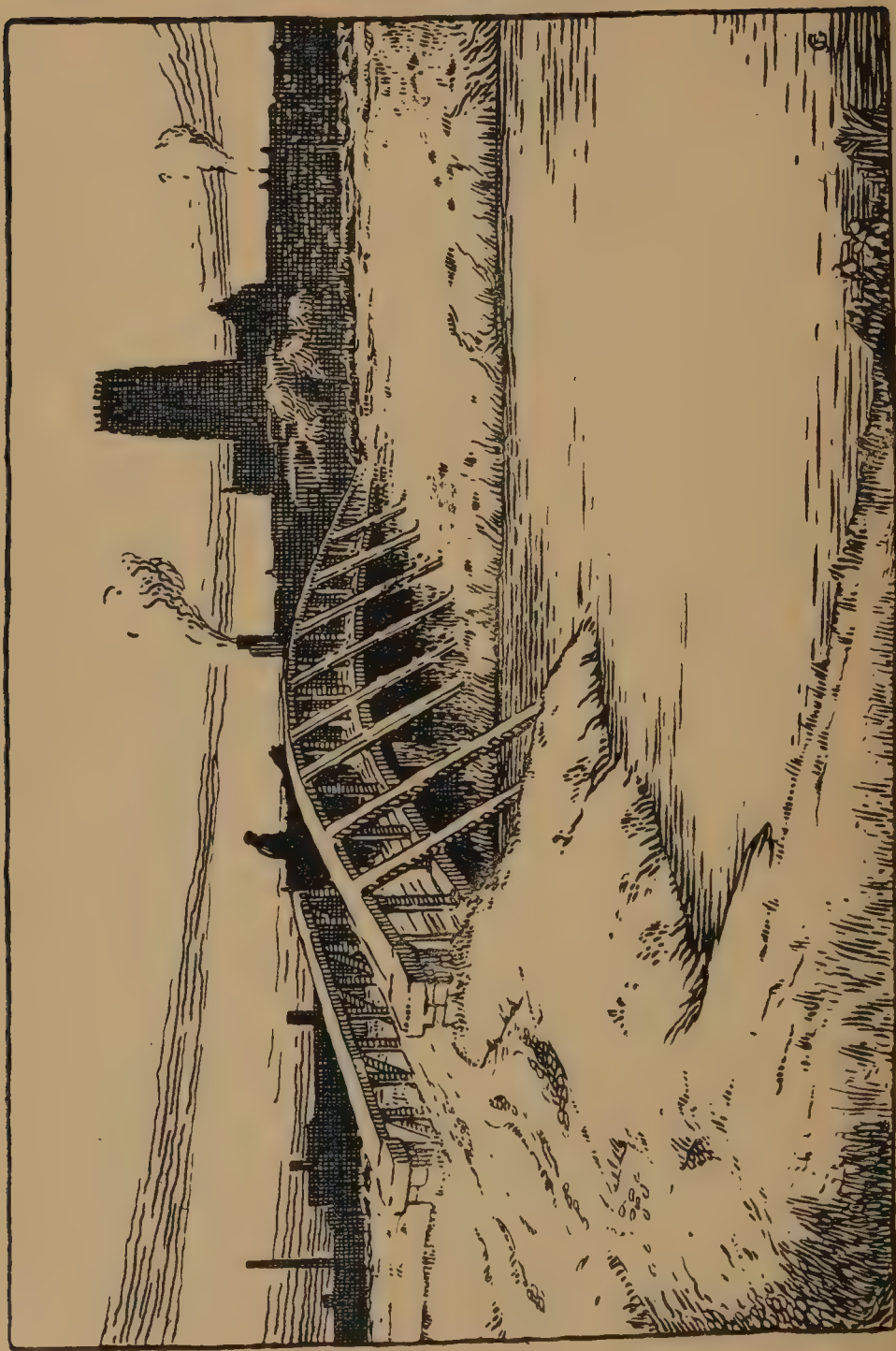


FIG. 51. DONCASTER FROM THE RIVER.

to this texture by the length and quality of the grass, which may be close-cropped and fine, or long and lush, while the long grass may be wind-swept into rolling waves. A tree, if you are very close, will exhibit to you a few complete unmistakable leaf forms, but beyond these they merge into clumps and clusters where the individual shapes are difficult to distinguish. When sufficiently far away to see the tree as a whole you will find massed foliage, each mass more or less definite in contour, but, of the component leaves you will trace not one, but instead a texture, a sort of broken quality which will vary according to the species to which the tree belongs. The bole of the tree, its branches and twigs, present further problems in textures. The smooth bark of beech and birch, the more rugged surface of oak and elm, modified by age, perhaps, require different methods of handling, while the twigs can only be suggested by their texture seen against the sky. A tree in winter is a delicate subject to handle, for that multitudinous mass of twigs can only be suggested by soft tone or colour, with a touch of definite drawing here and there. It is so easy, and so fatal, to get it hard and unsympathetic, without atmosphere, and without life, a brazen tree or one of cast iron. Rocks cannot be treated in the same manner as loam,

Trees



FIG. 52. A WET NIGHT.



FIG. 53. A BUSY CORNER—DONCASTER.

sand or clay. Mud differs in quality and texture from dust. Wet sand presents a different appearance from dry. There is no need to labour this question of textures, enough has been said to show how vast is the field that lies before the landscape painter. The task we have set ourselves is to render the tone, colour and texture of the various elements in the landscape without overstepping the limitations of our medium, for the peculiar quality of that medium should be preserved even while we are endeavouring to suggest textures, tones and colours that enter into the picture. We should not lose sight of the texture of our medium while we strive to render the textures of sky, earth and water.

Figs. 49 to 55 are included by kind permission of the "Doncaster Gazette," in order to show that material for sketches can be found in the streets of our towns, and more frequently, perhaps, on the outskirts.



FIG. 54. A SILENT HIGHWAY.



FIG. 55. PEACE—ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, DONCASTER.



FIG. 56. KNARESBOROUGH CASTLE, YORKSHIRE.

Peter de Wint.

CHAPTER IV

EXAMPLES FROM THE OLD MASTERS

FIGURE 56 is by Peter de Wint. There is a quality in this sketch which stamps it unmistakably a water colour, and although the charm of the colour is lost in the reproduction, it is still possible to appreciate the clever arrangement of tone, and the direct handling of the medium. As a composition it is worth analysing. From the foreground on the left there is a path leading the eye into the picture. We pass the suggestion of cottages, and the vague hint of hill, but nothing is definite enough to hold the attention save the square keep which sparkles sufficiently to make us pause. But we do not linger there, we pass the two minor projections and return by way of the strong dark trees to the bend in the river. At this point there is a bright light in brilliant contrast with the heavy trees. This forms the keynote or focal centre, and the eye will return there after every excursion to other parts of the picture. To test the value of this passage, cover it with a piece of paper, and note how flat and lacking in interest the sketch becomes. The

lines all lead to this point, and the tones are arranged to emphasize it. There is nothing in the dark mass on the right to hold the eye, the square ruin might perhaps compete with it, but only to a minor degree, while the light just at the bend compels the eye to seek that spot, and we can imagine the stream winding away between the hills into the alluring unknown which lies somewhere beyond. We cannot see its windings save in fancy, but we can hardly fail to trace it, because it seems the only passage through the sketch, as it were, into the distance which lies beyond the dark trees and past the hill, which is lighter and more atmospheric at this part. If one dared to suggest an alteration, without being accused of conceit for presuming so much with a de Wint, it would be to take a little from the sky above the ruin. It would seem to add dignity and height to the ruin-capped hill. Granted this may be merely a matter of opinion, but there is much to be learned from experiment, and the student should exercise his critical faculties, and while admitting the beauty and excellence of the old masters, there is no need to assume that they always achieved perfection. If an alteration suggests itself, test it and see whether the result is more pleasing, for in so doing we may learn something which may help in future work.



FIG. 57. JOHN CROME.

Fig. 57 is by John Crome, an excellent study of trees, full of careful drawing in trunks, branches and foliage. Note the manner in which the masses of leaves melt into the sky, for too often the beginner manages to make his trees look as though they had been cut out and stuck on to the sky instead of being "lost and found," as it were, in the enveloping atmosphere. The framework of the trees—their boles, branches, and twigs are beautifully rendered. Sometimes mingling with the foliage, sometimes shapely defined, and sometimes left faint and mysterious for the fancy to trace. There is knowledge and a close study of Nature in the curvature of the limbs. How wonderfully true they seem, and yet how finely composed. The breadth of treatment in the foreground is masterly, just simple washes, with a few pregnant strokes suggesting texture, and a gradual darkening of tone as the path nears the water. How cleverly that little glimpse of river has been introduced to give interest and sparkle to the scheme. Blot it out and see how much is lost. It is the brightest note in the sketch, and it is juxtaposed by some of the strongest dark. The lines of the pathway lead the eye towards it, and it is framed by the trees which flank the pathway. The technique in the foliage, and the limbs is worth careful

consideration. There are no meaningless blobs, but purposeful brush strokes applied with skill and knowledge.

Fig. 58 is a typical Constable sketch in oils, broadly handled and "juicy" in treatment, if such a word be permissible. There is no hesitation visible here; it is an impression which looks as though it had been dashed in during an inspired mood to catch a transient effect, one of the innumerable lovely pictures which Nature paints during a day of cloud and sunshine. Constable has been aptly termed "the father of Impressionism." At any rate he endeavoured to paint Nature, dispensing with the "brown tree" which by the "Classic" school was considered an essential feature in every landscape. He went direct to Nature and interpreted her moods; her rain, and wind, and sunshine as no one had done before. He loved the gleams of light that shone from cloud-enshadowed landscapes, the glitter of rain-splashed foliage, and the rolling masses of cumulus, which are so typical of the English countryside. It is curious to note that during his student days at the Royal Academy Schools he copied some of Sir Joshua Reynolds' pictures, and painted one himself of "Christ blessing the little ones," but after some "two years running



FIG. 58. CONSTABLE.

FIG. 59. VIEW IN THE LANDES; SOUTH OF FRANCE.



after pictures and seeking the truth at second-hand," as he says in a letter to a friend, he returned to East Bergholt, his home in Suffolk, and entered the school of Nature. Constable loved the elm above all other trees, as well he might, and he loved the great clouds sailing above them, and the wind that stirred their foliage. He loved the Stour, the streams, canals, meadows, woods and valleys, the hamlets, villages and manor houses of the beautiful and fertile region where he lived and worked. The sketch here shown is a curious composition, with the road running to the right, but it turns just before reaching the margin, and so leads the eye back into the picture instead of out of it. The gleam of light on the distant water furnishes a keynote which is of great value to the composition. It is possible that the hedge, which occupies so much of the foreground, is a trifle heavy, also the tree forms, but it is less apparent in the colour, while the middle distance and background are fine in tone and arrangement, with simple but adequate cloud forms above.

Fig. 59, a "View in the Landes," by T. Rousseau, is worthy of careful study for its wonderful management of tones. A low horizon gives room for an expanse of tenderly painted clouds, mostly grey, but culminating in a lighter

area just where it is needed. A dark tree silhouetted upon this area gives it greater value. The light sky is reflected in the water which breaks up the low-toned foreground. A group of cattle drinking, with the girl who tends them, furnish a note of animation. The trees are delightfully drawn, and where there seemed a danger of too much weight the sky peeps through the branches and the foliage. The line of the tree tops rises towards the crest of the highest tree. Not too obviously, but plainly enough for the student to see. The distance is mainly light, with an emphatic darkening near the horizon to lure the observer across the intervening space. It is a beautifully realised mood of quietude and solitude, dominated by horizontal lines, just sufficiently broken by the unobtrusive verticals in the trees. There is enough curvature to hint at life and movement without disturbing the calm serenity of the scheme. It is the peace which sometimes falls upon strong, vital, growing things, and not the stillness of inertia or decay which is here suggested.

Fig. 59 is by Harpignies. A fluid, direct water colour which charms by its spontaneity of treatment and its fine pattern of branch and foliage drawn across the sky. The centre tree

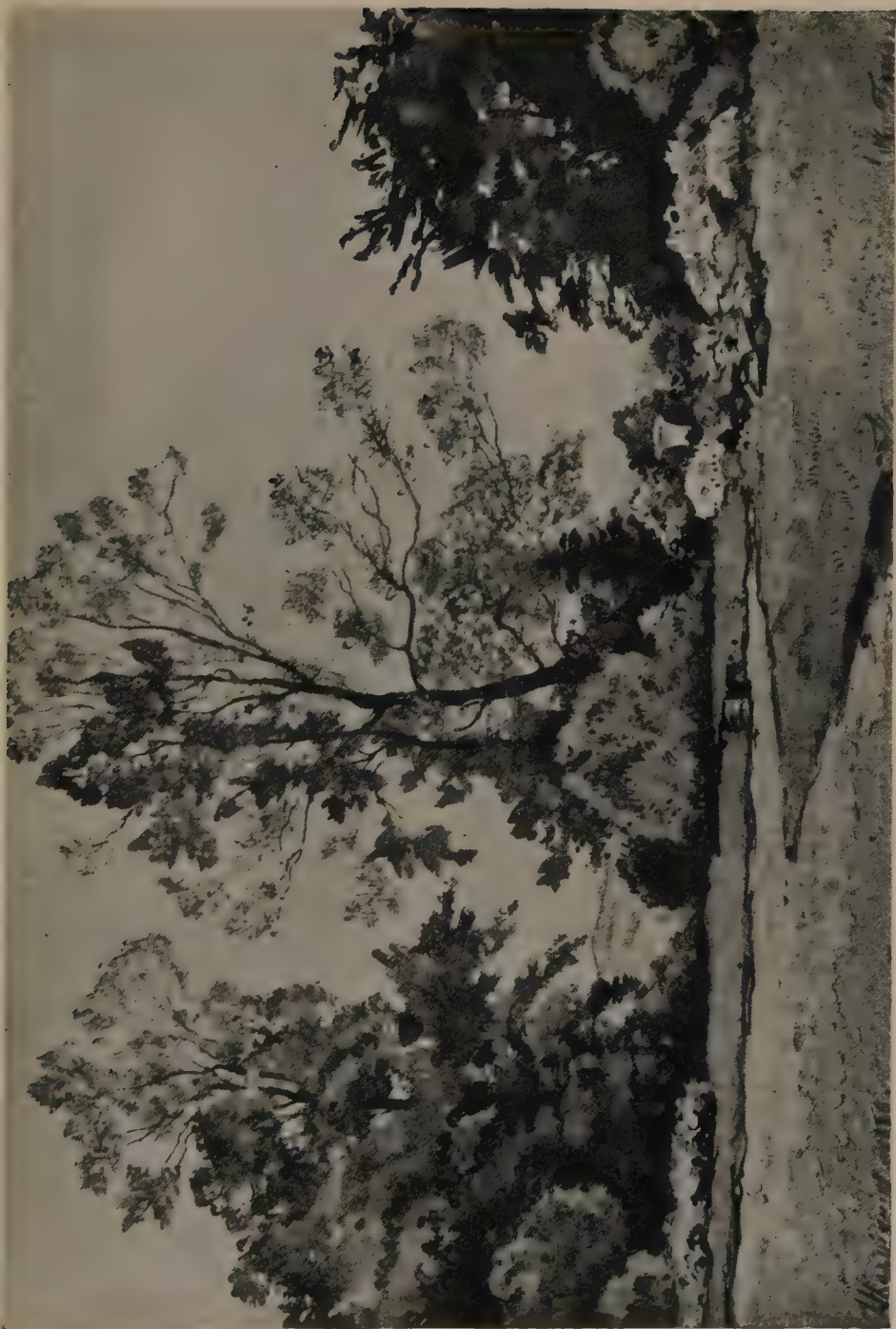


FIG. 60. WATER COLOUR PAINTING. FAMARS, NEAR VALENCIENNES, BY HENRY HARPIGNIES (B. 1819, D. 1916).
SIGNED AND DATED 1886. (*Ionides Bequest.*)

is exquisitely rendered, the curves being full of vitality and a sense of growth. It is more convincing than the heavier mass on the right, which looks a trifle flat in its uniformity of tone. There is more modelling and rotundity of mass in the tree on the left, which again is lightened by the framework of stem and branch which runs through the foliage. It is an example of three different methods of treatment dependent upon the nature of the particular tree depicted. It might well be analysed as a composition in order to discover what possibilities the sketch contains. By covering up the tree on the left, and alternatively the one on the right, the student may test its suitability for a square panel instead of an oblong. The vase form on the right, together with the strong contrast in tone which occurs at this point seem to catch the eye and to form a focal centre the more pronounced because the trend of line in the foreground and the curvature in the tree stem lead the attention towards it. If the tree on the left is obliterated this point of interest is enhanced in value, and it would seem to result in a more pleasing composition. The line of the path runs out of the picture on the left instead of into it as on the right, consequently the right-hand portion makes a better composition than the left. It may seem pre-

sumptuous thus to experiment with the work of an artist with a reputation like Harpignies, but by so doing we can learn a good deal about picture making. Not every picture or sketch even of the greatest men arrives at perfection, and if we do not feel satisfied there is no harm in trying to discover the reason why. The treatment of this sketch is charming in its clean transparency, though this can hardly be appreciated to the full in a half-tone reproduction. Enough is retained however to show how strong and vigorous is the handling. There is no hesitation, no tentative suggestion, it is confident in drawing and direct in painting.

Fig. 60 is a sketch by Richard Parkes Bonington, who accomplished so much during his short life of twenty-seven years. It is beautifully composed in line and tone. The church with its tapering spire, set in a dark mass of foliage, holds the attention because all else is subordinated thereto. The shapes of the foliage and the careful planning of the tones help considerably in the production of the effect. The darkest tones are well grouped about the light buildings to the advantage of both. There is a bit of wall on either side, but in the centre it has fortunately collapsed, providing an easy means of approach to the



FIG. 61. LANDSCAPE WITH CHURCH AND COTTAGES, WATER COLOUR.

Richard Parkes Bonnington.

cottages and the church. Had the wall continued across the foreground it would have made an unpleasant barrier. It is always difficult to compose a wall or any form of barrier which runs horizontally across the picture. It seems to bar progress, to convey a hint of "Trespassers will be prosecuted," and so rouses a sense of irritation or resentment. Further, it tends to cut the picture up into unpleasant shapes. If the barrier is there, and must be retained it is wise to keep its tones subordinate to the rest of the scheme, to minimise its importance, to lose sight of it as far as circumstances will permit. Bonington has been more drastic in his treatment, he has knocked a huge gap in the wall, so that the spectator may proceed into the picture without let or hindrance. The use of the pencil is not disguised here, it is frankly accepted and incorporated into the sketch, and there is no doubt that the delicate grey pencil line can be of great service in suggesting the detail of architectural structure and enrichment. It may be hyper-criticism, but I cannot help feeling that the figure is facing in the wrong direction. One is constrained to wonder what he can be looking at, and whether what he sees is more interesting than the church and cottages which have furnished the artist with his theme. At any

rate I think the observer would be more satisfied if that little figure had not decided to turn his back upon the scene, and upon the artist and spectator as well. The figure is merely an incident in the picture, a little touch of life, and consequently may be deemed of no particular import, but figures are always interesting, and so need to be carefully considered with regard to their effect upon the picture they are introduced into.

These illustrations, with their accompanying notes, have been included in order to suggest to the student a critical and analytical attitude towards the work of others. If we desire to paint well it is not enough merely to enjoy the work which appeals to us, we must do more than this. We must endeavour to find out the reasons for our enjoyment, and on the other hand, the reasons why other works leave us cold and unmoved. Enjoyment of art is to a large extent emotional, but the discovery of the why and wherefore depends upon the exercise of the intellect. Fine art is a wholesome blend of intellect and emotion. Pure intellect is cold, while emotion unrestrained is apt to degenerate into sickly sentiment. The assumption that landscape painting is easy, requiring no intellectual effort and but little knowledge, is

absurd. A good landscape needs thought, concentration and knowledge, in addition to which it must be "touched with emotion." At the root of all creation lie immutable laws of harmony, and if we would produce work which is really creative, instead of merely imitative, we must endeavour to attune our minds and personalities to these laws. Love of beauty is based on the spiritual rather than the material, and so if we are able to add one jot or tittle to the beauty in the world, we shall surely have done something to benefit our fellows, and also ourselves, for there is no joy like unto the joy of creation.

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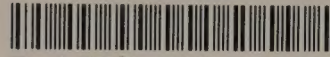
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